

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

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March 1983

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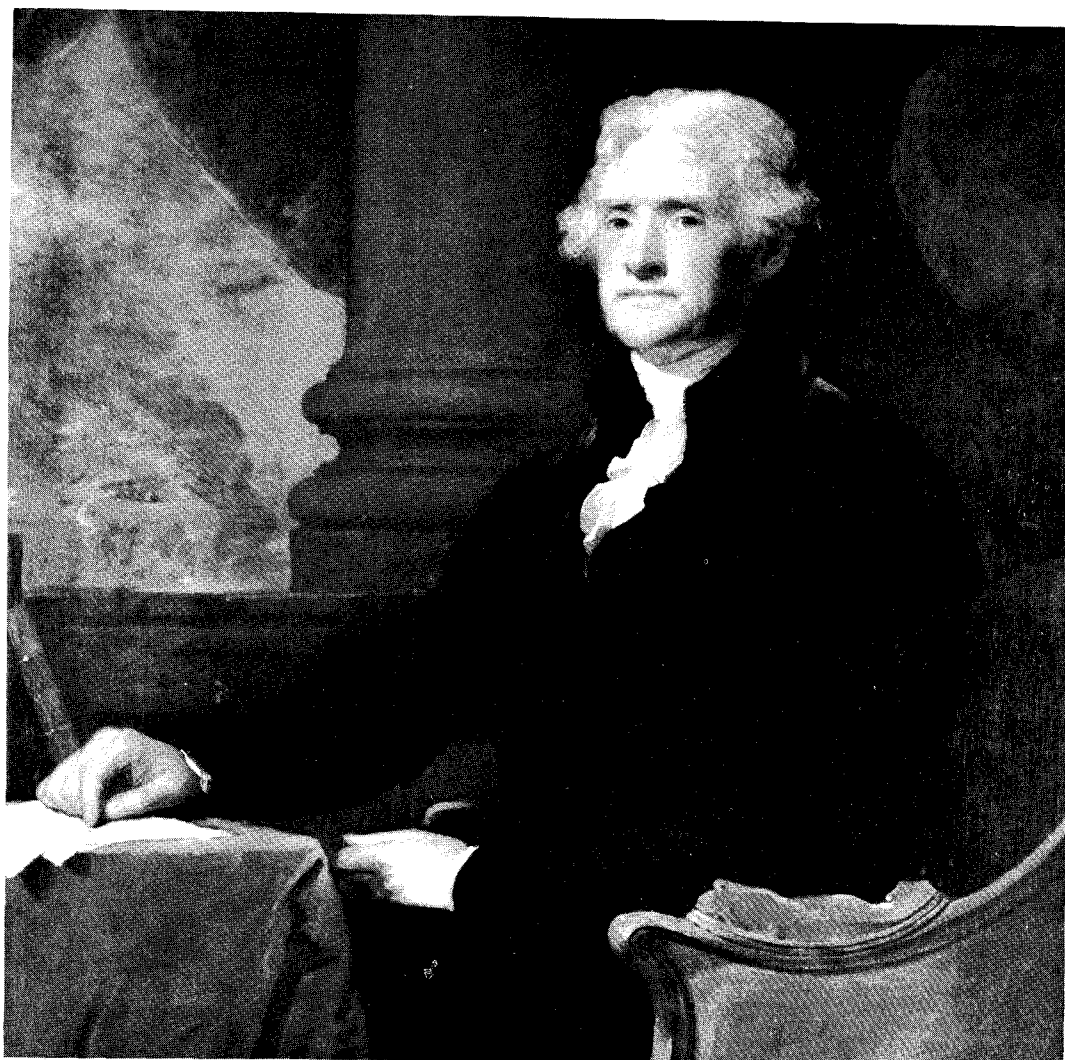
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Sir

Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

I am a subscriber to the *N. American review* and understand you are agent for that work in Richmond. it will be more convenient for me to have it furnished from that place because payment there is easier made. I shall be glad therefore to receive it from you and this letter presented to Col^o. Bernard ^{my son-in-law} Peyton of Richmond will ensure your receiving payment from him on my account, once a year or oftener if you chuse. I have received N^o. 46. but not N^{os}. 44. and 45. which I shall be glad therefore now to receive, accept the assurance of my respect.

T. J.

Since 1815, no magazine in America has had a readership more distinguished or a literary history more rich than *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*. Now available at newsstands, as well as by subscription.

The news that isn't delivered day and night

If you think of the news as a daily or nightly affair, it's understandable.

For one thing, one side of the world is always fast asleep when the other is up and doing.

For another, all of us who work a full day and a full week are bound to feel that we've missed something that happened to someone, somewhere, while we were too busy to notice.

And yet, many a newscaster maintains that newscasts are not enough. As Walter Cronkite has put it, "Broadcast journalism is never going to substitute for print in the total spectrum of communications." The teletype machine doesn't, after all, have a monopoly on news. Neither do those who attempt to cover the news at dawn, or high noon, or after the sun sets, much less on the hour.

What is new in the world often comes upon you in moments of silence rather than times of trauma, because the new facts, the new ideas, the new perspectives and, yes, the new products you come across are often made a part of you in a very leisurely way: when you open a magazine.

A magazine isn't something that you or anyone else tends to skim on the run. At an average price of \$1.50 per newsstand copy, it costs too much for that. It also cuts too deep for that.

When you come right down to it, a magazine is like no other medium for the simple reason that it isn't a daily routine. Depending on its scope and its point of view, it may be published once every week, once every two weeks, once every four weeks, or once every three months. Its subject matter may be the world at large, but more often, it's a study in depth of a vital part of someone's world—an art, a science, a sport, or a certain way of looking at the world for a certain man, a certain woman, a certain child.

As a result, a magazine has it in its powers to introduce its readers to news of any and all descriptions—from new political disclosures to new industrial empires, from new insights to new inventions, from new fashions to new trends, from new recipes to new regimens, and from new stars on the horizon to new discoveries on earth and new dimensions in the universe.

To put it another way, the art of editing a magazine is to look beneath and beyond the surface of daily events. And whenever a magazine does its job particularly well, it is not only capable of opening the eyes of its readers.

The truth is, it can often open the eyes of the very journalists whose job it is to deliver the news day and night.

Nothing opens your eyes like a magazine.

This message is one in a series from America's magazines.

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Spring—which began arriving in the NAR's neck of the woods along about the first week in February (and may have gone away again by the time this issue reaches the newsstands)—brings a number of new names to the NAR's pages. Joan Givner, Beth Brown, Elizabeth Collison, and Sandra Witt have not published with us before, and nearly all the 4-minute contributors (pages 30-46) are newcomers. Maria Thomas will be remembered as one of the three authors who brought the 1981 National Magazine Award for Fiction to us—and "Silver Sugar from Bombay" will remind you of the justice of that award. We also happen to think our regular contributors, the Lash-Sanders-Hertzel crowd, are at the top of their form herein. Read, delight, let the year be green for the NAR's 168th birthday.

We trust it is clear to the more competitive of our readers that "the four-minute story"—our perhaps too-frequent concession to the rapid flight of time—is only approximately that. Some stories can be got through in three minutes or so; others may take six or seven. Anyone addicted to the stopwatch may be reassured that failure to crack the four-minute barrier is not necessarily sufficient reason to enroll in a speed-reading program. The matter comes up, of course, because this issue of the NAR offers yet another round of small but strong fictions, starting at page 29.

This number of the magazine marks the return of Larry

Sturhahn to his accustomed back-of-the-book place—this time inaugurating a department called "Performance." A long-time film type, Larry has often ventured into theatre and television commentary; we think the broader title better accommodates his curiosity.

Immoral-Equivalent-of-War notes:

If there was any doubt of the Reagan administration's contempt for the people it alleges to serve, the ongoing EPA chaos removes it. Mismanagement, document-shredding, political expediency, arrogant lying—what new rough beast lies waiting for its hour to come round? It used popularly to be argued that Americans could never comprehend the true horror of war because our homeland had never been ravaged by it. Now that we have seen the poisoning of Times Beach and 13,000 other toxic waste disposal sites, we know the reality of the most subtle—and permanent?—of weapons, and we begin to realize the price it exacts. True horror, indeed.

A note to prospective contributors:

The North American Review will not be reading fiction again until October 1, 1984—partly to use up a considerable backlog of stories, and partly to allow the NAR's editor to enjoy a sabbatical leave. We will continue to read poetry, and non-fiction if its authors have queried us beforehand.



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★ THE NORTH AMERICAN ★

REVIEW

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VOLUME 268, NUMBER 1

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Paula Goldman, Allen Woodman, Sandra J. Kolankiewicz, and
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I am sitting on my back porch this stormy June morning, thinking a little about Thoreau, because my beans are climbing high, but thinking even more how quiet it is. Robins are loudly singing in the lilacs, so perhaps the rain will hold off a while longer. Except for the robins, a droning airplane overhead, and a faint constant humming of traffic two blocks away, it is quiet.

As I sit here, admiring my beans and marvelling at the birds, I realize how seldom my life holds so little noise. Most of the time I hear a whole orchestra of competing sounds, all tuning up together: my daughter's lilting inquisitive voice, dynamite exploding on Tom and Jerry, a buzzing timer for the pizza, the pounding of a dishwasher. Perhaps because this is such a quiet cool morning, a breeze blowing in from the lilacs, I think of another writer, Sarah Orne Jewett, and the silence of life in her Maine fishing village. I can close my eyes and hear the few sounds that broke her silence: bees in a summer field, sheepbells, the scrape of a boat down at the landing. Fewer, and more soothing, noises than mine. As I sit now in this squeaky metal chair, wishing I could hear waves washing against the Maine coast, I am awash in the undertow of the sounds in my own life.

Years ago, when I first read *Walden*, Thoreau's chapter on "Sounds" opened my ears. But I was struck then, and I am still amazed, by the difference in sounds that constitute his world and mine. Not only did he live by a country pond while I live on a crowded city street; but more important, he was a defiantly lonely man, and I have chosen to link my life to others. On a winter morning he listened to the booming of frozen ice on a winter pond, while I and my daughter wait near the screech of rusty skates sharpening at Cliff's Hardware. But I do not mind the noises there. We talk to a neighbor waiting in line behind us; Cliff asks about the weather outside; his wife rings up two mouse-traps at the cash register; my daughter chatters with excitement. It is a cacophony I am not sure Thoreau would know how to interpret.

I know he would hate my machines. So much of my noise is mechanical: on hot summer days,

Sounds

through open windows the buzzing and throbbing of clippers, mowers, edgers. In winter, the high-pitched grunt of the snowplow. Every Wednesday, sun or snow, the ravenous growl of the garbage truck. But these noises are reassuring, they tell me things are working, the system continues. I do not want to bury my own watermelon rinds or walk two miles to my office in knee-high drifts. Inside my house I listen for the comforting underground hum of things working too: the refrigerator gurgles loudly, the dehumidifier gasps and stops and gasps again, the furnace clicks and then roars softly. I am glad to hear them. I do not wish to haul ice onto a back porch, scrape mold from my cellar walls, stoke a fireplace with logs.

Now that I think about how much I depend on that background of mechanical noise, the hums and whirrs that together form a continuo like the ominous Machine in E.M. Forster's prescient tale, "The Machine Stops," in which everything eventually breaks down in apocalypse, I become a little nervous. I realize how sensitively I am tuned into my machines, as much perhaps as Thoreau into the hourly thawing of ice on Walden Pond. I am always on edge for the sounds that indicate something is going wrong. A clank in the basement: did the furnace just go out? The pipes may freeze before the repairman gets here. Hundreds of dollars. Maybe a new furnace. Two



thousand. Any strange metallic noise means trouble, money, time, worry. I am used to the rejecting thump of my overloaded washer, which, having announced its irritation, usually turns itself off. But when last week a loud thrunk made my kitchen floor vibrate, I rushed down the stairs. A fuse had blown, smoke hovered over the machine, the Maytag man might come tomorrow morning if I stayed home from work but he might not, a load of sopping clothes to the laundromat. Even little noises can make my heart sink. Click, click, click; the dishwasher can't quite make it into the rinse cycle. It is two months out of warranty. Another repairman, another wait, another big bill. I try not to think of Thoreau now. I know what he would say: "Our houses are such unwieldy property that we are often imprisoned rather than housed in them."

Thoreau and Jewett could listen peacefully to water, the murmur of a pond, the wash of a tide. I listen to water too, but indoors the sound of water is ominous. Something must be managed, taken care of, watched, turned off. A washing machine churns; soon after its water sloshes into the tub, I will have to dump clothes in the dryer, sort, fold, put away. Faucets gush hot water into the bathtub: the tub mustn't overflow, Jenny mustn't burn herself, I will have to stay close to the bathroom, clean out the tub afterwards. Sometimes the toilet runs, wasting water, asking to be jiggled, coddled, fixed. I do not like to have my toilet talk to me. The worst water sound I have heard recently was a slow rush of waves in my basement, a sound of something emptying, something else spreading, filling up. The water heater had broken, flooding the floor. Where was the turn-off valve? What would happen to the gas connection? How could I mop all that up? How soon could I get a new heater? How much would it cost? What would I do with the old one? I hate the sound of water indoors.

But perhaps this morning I can hear raindrops, if I wait on the porch long enough for the storm to break. Meanwhile I can listen to the swoosh of maple leaves in the big drooping tree in my front yard. They rustle so gently, like the lapping of waves, that I

am lulled, here in my chair, to lean back against the wall and dream once more of Maine. Soon, though, I must get up. I have to drive before lunch to the grocery store; we are out of milk, eggs, lettuce, paper towels. Instead of listening to wind in the leaves, I will have to attune all my senses to my Dodge Dart. It is old now, eight years, which in human terms must be a hundred and two, and it is breaking down insidiously, one joint at a time. I am no mechanic, but I have had to learn how to listen to my car. Perhaps the way I have tuned myself into that rusty purple Dodge is a paradigm of what sounds I have had to make most important in my life.

How relieved I am when my Dodge is working: the motor throbs; the turn signal rat-a-tat-tats; the washer fluid squirts with the splat of spilled juice on my windshield. Then I sit happily at the intersection, as the motor vibrates steadily and loudly: we will make it to the end of the freeway, we will get where we're going, we may even get home again. But most of the time I am poised, tense and alert, for the sounds of things going wrong. I know some of them. Who could miss the whine of a dying battery, the heavy thwap of a flat tire on pavement, the gunfire of a bad muffler? I even know more esoteric sounds: the loud dry scraping of a leak in my power-steering fluid; the squeak of a bad shock-absorber gasket; the faint thrump-thrump-thrump of a faulty heat-riser valve. That last one was an auditory triumph, showing how sensitive I have become. My friendly mechanic didn't hear it at first, he thought maybe my choke spring was bad. But I told him to keep very still as I drove around the block: thrump-thrump-thrump when I accelerated. Yes, he said finally, he guessed he could hear that. It was probably the heat-riser valve. Hard to get at, two days to get parts, could I leave the car sometime when convenient. It's never convenient. Someday my Dodge will drop a vital organ, I may not be able to turn, or stop, or keep steering straight. My life may depend on how carefully I listen to what it's telling me. So I listen hard.

As I sit here, thinking about my old Dodge waiting in the driveway with patient malignance, the telephone rings. In the few seconds it takes me to reach the phone, I realize that someone I don't want to talk to is going to be on the line. Someone

wanting something. The telephone rings so insistently: I want, I want. I want to sell you aluminum siding, ask your advice, tell you what my lover said last night, find out tomorrow's assignment. It is a demanding noise, like the others, wanting not only time and money but also affection. Yet once in a while there will be a voice on the other end I need to hear; so I answer.

Most noises in my life do demand something, I say to myself irritably as I sit down once more on the porch. I can seldom just listen to anything for pure pleasure. Now I sense Thoreau standing behind me, cutting through self-pity to the obvious, always unbearably right. Haven't I chosen to live this life? Couldn't I tear out my telephone, sell my car, heat water on a wood stove and wash dishes with tallow soap? Couldn't I live on the beach in Mexico, join a commune in Vermont, move to Arizona with a tent and a horse? I could do any of those things, I suppose, except I don't choose to.

And yet, I would say in some confusion to Thoreau, I have some sounds in my life that bring me joy. True: I do not often get to listen to a hooting owl, the scream of a hawk, the sweet peal of a church bell vibrating through the woods. But, finely tuned as my ears are to the mechanical continuo of my civilized life, I am also tuned into human sounds. You would never understand them, for they are a kind you never knew. I think of my daughter.

When my daughter is home, our house is filled with excited cries, laughter, questions, or, as she puts it, just plain "chitter-chatter." It resounds with her delighted whoop as she runs through the sprinkler, the songs she sings lovingly to her dolls, the serious conversations she has with wounded stuffed animals. It reverberates with her jarring whine, that dissonance like a violin string out of tune and played without rosin. She has many tones, though I seldom analyze them or sort them out consciously. I hear them instead like my own heartbeat, as familiar and as essential to my own well-being. Sometimes when I have to try to pay attention to her voice and to the noises of my machines at the same time, I become cross and distracted. But I concentrate on her sounds first: she, after all, speaks my name, and my machines do not.

Many of the sounds of love in my life are indistinguishable from the sounds of responsibility. Perhaps that is why now that she is gone for the day, I can feel myself unwind so completely. For a little while, I can shut off that part of my hearing apparatus. Some of the ways a parent listens are not so different from constantly being alert for an ominous clank, or gurgle, or click. The soft padding of small feet in the hall at night wakens me like a cap pistol; it means trouble, maybe only thirst, perhaps an upset stomach, a fever, a nightmare. Trouble has many sounds. Muffled crying; hurt feelings, anger, and a need for reassurance. Most terrifying of all, what I think of as the blood cry: a shriek that means something has been cut, hurts, is bleeding. As I run, much faster than for a flooding water heater, I do not know until I get there whether it is a cracked skull or a torn fingernail. In those moments, I am always amazed how that cry has cut through me like a knife.

As I sit here on the porch, remembering with a shiver the last time I heard that blood cry, I feel a touch of cold. I notice that I no longer hear the leaves. The wind has died, dark clouds have covered the sun, the birds have stopped singing. A murmur of distant thunder: a summer storm is coming. I must go inside and shut the windows. Then to the grocery store. My brief moment of peace is over. But I will have other moments; as I rise, scraping the metal chair against the cement, I think one last time of Thoreau, my machines, my daughter. I would like to tell Thoreau about the most peaceful sound I know. It is one I can listen to every night. Just before I put out the lights and go to bed, I walk into my daughter's room to cover her shoulders and to see if she is sleeping soundly. She almost always is, curled into a nestling shape, her chest rising and falling with the faintest of breaths. I stand there for a short time, hearing only the soft sounds of her sleep, a gentle sigh, in and out, in and out. All other noises drop away, a knot of twisted melodies that now falls harmlessly to the floor. I have distinguished most of them, but I cannot tell exactly how they are all wound together. Yet as I listen to my own breathing in a counterpoint to hers, I know I am standing in the still center of my life.

—Susan Allen Toth

When I first saw San Francisco, 1953 or thereabouts, it was clear that this was not only the most beautiful city in the U.S. but that it was world-class beautiful. The hills, the houses jigsawed up them, and below, visible almost everywhere and from all kinds of angles, the sparkling blue eyecatch of the bay, two great bridges strung across it, ships coming and going under the Golden Gate. And it was not a large city; it lost neither itself nor you. Even with its verticality it supported fewer than 700,000 people, with no room for many more, luckily bounded, like Rio de Janeiro.

A major scenic element in any city is the people. How they look, flow, dress, talk (sound as scenery), hold their heads. San Francisco hadn't the amble of a southern city, but it wasn't quick-moving. It isn't geographically fashioned for fast walking and numbered streets. The people moved at a reasonable, a human, pace. It was the West's most sophisticated city; they dressed with some dash, spoke recognizable English. But the thing that mattered above all was the look on their faces. It was . . . pleased. They were glad to live there. I had seen that look in Paris and Rio and Florence, sometimes in London. Nowhere else in the U.S. unless it owed to a particular sunny day. Here they looked pleased even in fog.

I moved to San Francisco as soon as I could. And made it mine. For ten years my city—my glitter of water, my backlit hills, my cioppino and sourdough bread, my confident condescension toward other cities. Then the flower children arrived.

Welcome, we all said. Welcome, you smiling teeny-weenies with the tin cup guitars. You're safe here. Sing in the streets, say your poetry in the North Beach bars, wear beads and headbands, sleep with each other to your bottom's content. You're safe here.

And they were.

We weren't.

Flower children rooted and grew to hippies. Hippies grew to hopheads. They all wrote home: come on out, it's hip here, no hassles. And they came on out. Great Greyhound buses of them, chirping like grasshoppers. Singing the rest of us ants. Even us artists, who had been naming the others squares. Art was *work*,

San Francisco: A Tale of Tolerance

after all, and work was . . . well man, like, you know. . . .

Across the Bay Bridge in Berkeley the spume of the Beat Generation wet the air. The Vietnam War crystallized it, gave the students something worthwhile to do with their lives—they could educate their elders. University life took to the streets. Berkeley became the capitol of the Bay Area. Exciting and knuckle-headed; pretentious and brave; bright and darkened over; sadly meaningful. By the time the war ended, the protest movement had already gone on to become a lifestyle. The removal of the war revealed a hollowness in much of the movement, showed forth the new Wasteland Folk, headpiece filled with straw. Trashing. Combing around for a usable ort of guilt to push under somebody's nose.

Meanwhile the middle-class elders, educated by their middle class children in the look and luxe of permissiveness, began to fill in Marin County, across the Golden Gate bridge. They arrived all hot and set to go on to a new life. They bought BMW's, escorts, est and all the other items on the lengthening menu of psychodishes. They *spoke* psychology. And little else. They made Marin famous. You could buy indulgences in store fronts.

Not long after, San Francisco began to squeak with the sound of gays coming out of closets. Fine. Come on out, what you doing in there anyway? This is San Francisco. And soon again,



in the normal order of things, the limp wrist became the iron fist. No more decorous Union Street. All of Castro Valley now. Colorful street vendors selling whips, prosperous S-M stores, public sexing—an orgy of revenge. 20% of the population now, they became the power in politics. "Swing vote," one of them (a friend of mine) laughed.

Then the subway system came, making San Francisco more easily available to the rapidly growing suburbs. Silicon Valley brought sums of money and people to the peninsula with San Francisco as their playpen. Added to the already parasitic economy of the golden city of tourism.

It was all, finally, too damned much. The city couldn't go on absorbing these continuing flows of new people and their ways, couldn't dilute them and so seem relatively unchanged, as New York and L.A. might. Welcomed to the city, they have become the city. They are what you see when you go there. Not because you're a gawker from the tame towns but because they are concerned to make you into one. Being seen is their thing. Their work. Union Square is a keeperless zoo. All manner of specimens from far-off pharmacopeia. All kinds of hands on all kinds of places. Winos, bag ladies, one-note musicians, pigeon collectors. Like a gob of spit in your eye.

Down along Montgomery Street in the financial center, the three-piece suiters come down from their skyblockers and walk the street so hard the sidewalks shake, scurrying as if they were in New York.

Some things haven't changed. Herb Caen goes on in the *Chronicle* warming up the same self-satisfied hors d'oeuvres for the S.F. dinner tables. Herb Gold hasn't changed. He goes to New York and comes back saying how relieved he is, as if he'd gone to the toilet. The bread and fish are as good as ever, the coffee houses better.

There are more big buildings, more waterfront "development" (like silicon in the breasts). But up on a hill looking out and around and down it remains a place of ineffable beauty. A place now. Down in the streets, it's a city ragged with psychosocial potholes. As if somebody invited a war in and it stayed.

—Kenneth Lash

JOAN GIVNER

A SPECTATOR SPORT



English grammar schools, like English towns, are often comfortably haphazard as if, instead of being planned, they grew by some natural process and assimilated various architectural styles along the way. Thus, a converted vicarage might be tacked on to a Nissen hut and both of them attached by a clumsy walkway to a new concrete building housing some modern facility like a science lab or a gymnasium.

The Bromleigh School was entirely different in this respect. It had been liberally endowed by a rich manufacturer of soaps and detergents. No effort had been spared in its design and no expense in its execution. The exterior was of fine red sandstone and the interior—from the vaulted ceiling of the great hall down to the parquet floors and the individual students' desks—was of solid oak.

If there was any incongruity about the place it was a certain schizophrenia in the image that the school presented by suggesting at the same time a military fortress and a convent. The martial aspect of the central arch was denied by the motto emblazoned above it: BLESSED

BE THE PEACEMAKERS. The crenelated towers and battlements were contradicted by the interior cloisters which suggested silent meditation.

On our side of the central arch—the Girls' Division—the atmosphere was predominantly monastic. We were required to change into soft-soled shoes before we trod the parquet floors. Running was forbidden, hurrying frowned upon and shouting a punishable offense. The corridors were pervaded by a Sabbath hush and the smell of floor polish, and the entire school was kept, true to the conception of the first Lord Bromleigh, immaculate.

I have no means of knowing what it was like on the other side, for that mysterious region, at once so near and so remote, housed the Boys' Division. It might be expected that an enterprising or curious student could have stepped across from one side to the other. Physically, it would have been easy, but no one ever did that. The taboo was too strong, the fear of retribution too great. The two schools remained as isolate and separate as if the entire town of Bromleigh stood between them.

As a matter of fact, the astonishing thing was that the whole town of Bromleigh did *not* stand between them. Girls' and Boys' branches of grammar schools in all the surrounding towns were by time-honored custom thus separated. I am not sure whose mad heterosexual fantasy had resulted in the strange yoking of our schools. Did the first Lord Bromleigh pause in his purveying of cleaning fluids long enough to entertain unclean thoughts? Did notions of something beyond sterility float among his sudsy dreams? Perhaps the family tradition of naming thoroughbred racing fillies for the Girls' Division was not an innocent ploy that produced jokes on the platform on Founder's Day, but the indication of a sinister bent. Maybe the illustrious Founder envisaged the two sexes benefiting from common endeavors, profiting from innocent intercourse in sports and the arts.

And, indeed, oral tradition did recall a Golden Age of joint plays, debates and renderings of the Halleluja chorus. Unfortunately, these prelapsarian collusions resulted in more cooperation than was seemly. There were forbidden couplings under the benches of the biology lab and even, it was rumored, an unwanted offspring, presumably not named, like Lord Bromleigh's fillies, for the Girls' Division. Whatever the truth of this lore, the schools in my day conducted their choral concerts and plays independently. We did our Shakespearean plays in reverse Elizabethan manner with the girls taking all the parts. The boys did theirs, more authentically and much more successfully, with an all-male cast.

Such practices were entirely in keeping with the philosophy of our school, which was to erase as far as possible all consciousness of gender. Our school uniform was carefully designed with this intent. Its chief item was a gym tunic, straight up and down with great box pleats fore and aft. This garment was a great leveler for it made us all look like well-upholstered oil-drums. Underneath, we wore navy-blue knickers so long in the legs that when the elastic snapped, they dropped far below the hem of the tunic. We also wore men's shirts, ties and flat laced outdoor shoes. If we were reduced to the status of objects, they were definitely not sex objects.

It is, however, a fact universally acknowledged that repression does not necessarily produce asceticism. Did not the abstinence of the mystics help to foster wonderful visions? So with us. The discouragement of normal sexual awareness did not so much increase our studiousness as awaken myriad dreams and fantasies. Curious alignments, strange reveries with curlicues and exotic embroideries unfolded in our minds, convoluted and delicate and rare as the insides of sea-shells. Let no one grow clinical and use Latinate words like *sublimation*, *aberration* and *auto-eroticism*, for we knew none. They were the language of an unknown country to which we had neither map nor access. Incest we confused with setting fire to haystacks, orgasm with rudimentary forms of animal life like jelly fish, and copulation seemed most likely to be carried on by foreigners across the channel. Sex was the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returned, at least not to talk to us about it. It was a great uncharted continent and the distance to it from where we were was as far and impossible and alluring as the distance to the farthest star. It was our brave new world, our America, our perhaps-never-to-be-found-land.

Nevertheless, the inchoate impulses that made the first Lord Bromleigh create schools so extraordinarily conjoined were perhaps approved by a higher power, for they did at last achieve fulfillment. In spite of all the precautions of the headmistress and her staff and the headmaster and his staff, the two student bodies were—if not flung into each other's arms—at least brought into much closer proximity than those in authority could have imagined or condoned.

If peace was our scourge, war proved to be our salvation, for it prevented the completion of the grand design for the school. All the workmen and materials were channeled into the war effort before the school was quite finished. Consequently, the Girls' Division lacked a swimming pool and the Boys' Division, oh joy, lacked a dining room. It was easy for us to forego aquatic skills, and the boys were rarely disturbed at their studies by hearing us singing each to each in their pool. But the dining room was an entirely different matter, for they had to eat. In order to do so, all 555 boys made a daily route march from their school to ours, along our cloister and into the dining room. Strict rules were enforced, naturally. The dining room itself was declared out of bounds. So were the corridors all around the dining room. The cloister leading to the dining room was sealed off. The first floor bathrooms were closed. The garden outside the dining room windows was forbidden. In short, it was impossible for any girl to meet A Boy face to face. But, since we had dined early in order to free our facilities for the boys, it was not impossible to herd us back immediately into the classrooms, and we were still at large when the boys made their trek. Thus developed the great school sport of Watching the Boys, beside which lacrosse, netball, rounders, tennis and cricket were as nothing.

Each day when the hour struck, out we came from every corner of the schools—girls of all shapes and sizes, little ones and big ones, fat ones and thin ones, hale ones and lame ones. In summer we stretched out on the turf. In winter we stood mute and frozen, but to a girl we indulged

in the same gloating voyeurism. The younger ones were indiscriminating, idly curious, less famished in their attention. The older ones were already developing connoisseurs' eyes for shapely limbs, well-rounded thighs, airy brows. And always, here and there, someone incubated a passion for her Chosen One so overwhelming that it became legendary throughout the school. To such a girl, her own forced absences from school were catastrophic; the absences of the Chosen One, days of torment; and school holidays periods of acute suffering, dreaded, endured and only barely survived.

Thus our introduction to The Opposite Sex. Was this what the Headmistress had in mind when, in her initial interview with each incoming student and her parents, she asked her ritual question: "Does she understand the facts of life?" Many parents, as they contemplated the curious personage of Miss Dorothea Marley, must have asked themselves if she did. She was a woman of breathtaking ugliness, rivaling the Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland*, a combination of something from a different time or a different world. Of indeterminate sex, she wore an Eton crop hair-do, thick stockings and flesh-mortifying tweed suits. Her antique shoes had spool heels and bars across the front. No one knew where she found them, as they were no longer available in any shops. It was her boast, carried over from her days as a young headmistress, that she knew the name of every girl in the school. By our day she had reached a premature senility and could not remember any names at all, neither those of girls nor of staff members and it was said that she sometimes had to look up her own name in the Bromleigh telephone directory.

Because my friend and I shared the same name, however, she remembered it and pounced on us whenever she saw us, eager to prove her once-good memory.

"And where is The Other Janet today?"

"And where is your Fidus Achates today?"

I regret growing up before the phrase "role model" gained currency because we might have spent some entertaining hours speculating on the origin of this strange being, who when she retired, received many accolades—"guided the school through many important years of change and growth. . . ." "ever mindful as she piloted the school as a whole, of the needs of the most insignificant of its members . . ."

She seemed to us to be more mindful of the needs of horses who were being shipped from Ireland in "the most inhumane of conditions" to be slaughtered for consumption in France. I don't know why she deemed it her special responsibility to intervene in this satisfactory and remunerative arrangement between the two countries, but she did. All our fund-raising efforts were directed towards this cause and, whenever the *Bromleigh Evening News* asked Heads of schools to write editorials, instead of writing on the anticipated subjects relating to education, careers for women or some such, she wrote about horses. I remember once at a small tea given in her study for a visiting lecturer to which forced attendance was meted out on a rotating basis, she said that perhaps the level that any society had reached could be judged by its treatment of animals. She spoke with very great precision and pronounced society "societah." When she had uttered, she

smiled her beatific smile and looked around as if she had voiced words of infinite wisdom. We all thought she was dotty.

"A happy school." This was part of the legend. Miss Marley used the phrase when she retired and her successor responded that it was easy to be happy in a place of so much beauty. I think she referred to the oak bannisters, the red sandstone and the parquet floors.

Most of us survived the pressures of the place because, as adolescents, we were buoyant, hopeful, confident in the future and adept at contriving amusements and compensations.

I had fallen in love with language and literature and found a real, substantial joy in reading Shakespeare. The Other Janet was also immersed in literature but more jauntily somehow, for she was less dreamily romantic than I. She had acquired—perhaps from the second hand book stall on Bromleigh market—an ancient edition of John Donne's works. It was old enough to have the archaic script and small enough to slip in the pocket of her gym tunic. She carried it always on her person as her one indispensable text, her Bible, her weapon, her talisman. Every memory of these years is punctuated with fragments of a Fong or Fonnnet by John Donne. Usually these were lines about fex, or fummer or the fun, but the ancient calligraphy had so influenced her own speech that it was hard to say where Donne ended and she began.

If our present pleasures were in literature, language, laughter, there was always the promise of something more exciting at the end of the prison corridor of school, along which we crept in our soft-soled shoes for seven years, hardly daring to breathe or sneeze. The be-all and end-all of our discipline and deprivation and study was the celestial city of Oxbridge, waiting with its gleaming spires and waterways and all its beauty and excitement and loveliness. When we spoke its name, we saw our future selves rushing down the High, our undergraduate gowns floating on the breeze. Usually we were surrounded by a bevy of male students (the ratio of men to women was notoriously favorable there) who were boatered, blazered, gowned, old-school tied, titled and distinguished. In other manifestations, we saw ourselves punting on the river, sipping Champagne and nibbling strawberries at May balls or merely walking through the meadows on quiet Sunday afternoons. Studying? Reading? I don't remember that we thought too much about that. It was mostly the gowns and parties and suitors, our vision of the Emerald City. Some day, some day.

If that was our distant future, there was something nearer which combined present diversions with prospects of future enjoyment—the summer holidays, which for us meant *Abroad*. Through the school it was arranged that most of us could spend a month or two with a French or German family. The motives for such an excursion in my case were fairly complicated. My mother had the idea that I would improve my French accent and along with it my chances of getting into a good university. French was a required subject and my mother was a practical woman. The school's attitude was more sophisticated. The staff felt they provided quite enough in the way of teaching the

language—grammar, pronunciation, and even accent. But they knew there was more to understanding a different culture than merely learning the language. They wanted us to live with a French family in order to understand The French Way of Life. For us, the students, the journey needed no justification. Apart from the fact that we were madly francophilic, the journey offered our first excursion into The Outside World beyond the confines of our own homes and families. Suddenly, it seemed that the World At Large, the Continent, Abroad, even Life itself was being opened to us like a great three-dimensional movie on a wide screen.

I had an additional reason for the journey to France, for I had a grandmother. As a matter of fact, I had two living grandmothers, and they can hardly have been more different. One was extremely worldly and it seems now a great paradox that she remains the more shadowy of the two. She returns to me only in fragments—disembodied fingers, pudgy and beringed, dipping into boxes of chocolates; a big untidy bed with a pink bedspread and lots of newspapers, books and magazines; a cluttered dressing table with scent and powder and hair. She seemed not at all old and, when she was not in bed resting, she went about a great deal to play bridge and meet friends. Altogether, she was a very jolly, card-playing, loud-laughing, martini-loving, present-bearing, cigarette-smoking, flowery-hat wearing, roly-poly grandmother.

The other grandmother was patently not of this world and this time. She was old, shriveled, unfathomable and burdened by griefs too various and inarticulate to count—daughters lost to dubious religions, sons killed in the war, property dispersed, hopes shattered, grandchildren alienated, friends dead and gone. She lived in a world half of the living and half of the dead and her house was a museum of cracked paintings, yellowing photographs, stuffed fish in glass cases, heavy curtains, dark wood, gloomy alcoves, ugly Victoriana, stuffy heat.

It occurs to me for the first time that my grandmothers' early lives must have been very similar. Their losses were the same—daughters to unsuitable husbands, sons to the war, husbands to untimely deaths. Both were widows and lived alone in their oversized family homes—but what made one a merry widow and the other a guardian of the dead?

When I visited my jolly grandmother, which I did every week, she gave me things, bestowing them in a kind of ceremony. Upstairs in her bedroom she handed over a glass necklace, a brooch, always chocolates individually wrapped in shiny paper, peppermints, treacle toffee and forbidden drinks—sherry, cherry brandy, colored cordials with the cautionary phrase, "Don't let on to your Ma about this." She disliked my mother and maybe that's why she gave me the drinks I was not allowed to have. She slipped half a crown into my coat pocket when I left. We laughed a great deal and yet I can't remember her at all. I feel keenly my disloyalty and ingratitude in that matter.

With my other grandmother, in spite of her impassive face, it seems that I understood her mind and its inner workings. I was her lieutenant taking her on her weekly errand to the cemetery, carrying things, helping. We weeded a bit, pulled up grass that got among the plants,

left flowers in the pot. That done, we walked on the path looking critically at the other graves, reading the War Memorial:

THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD AS WE THAT ARE
LEFT GROW OLD

And then back home to put on the kettle and have some tea and digestive biscuits. There were drinks and chocolates in a cupboard but they were not offered, being reserved for emergencies. Brandy was for upset stomachs, chocolates for visiting children who had accidents. They all did, for this was a very accident-prone house. The stairs were steep, the floors splintery, the tables too crowded with fragile bric-à-brac. Her conversation was unjolly and its characteristic was not so much its extreme morbidity as the sense that words spoken were part of a subterranean dialogue that had been blown up, accidentally detonated so that fragments floated to the surface: a reference to my mother's bad heads, to someone who had died. Perhaps it was just in this that I felt akin to her, since I easily slipped into the submarine world of secret reverie.

She sometimes mentioned Alfred, her baby who had been killed along with thousands of Allied soldiers in Normandy. After the war she had been told that he was buried where he had fallen in a certain place. Through the War Office she was able to arrange for the spot to be marked and there it was, a very little narrow grave in a foreign field. A framed picture on her mantelpiece proved its existence and none of us realized that she minded not seeing it until the question of my going to France came up. Suddenly the excursion became a packaged deal, a group tour for the two of us. It was decided that we should go together. Her silent presence could protect me from abductors, child-molesters, rapists. In return, I could interpret for her. And, conveniently, she paid all our expenses.

And so, summer after summer, we set off to stay with the family we had selected from the roster of ones available and approved for Bromleigh School girls. Our family turned out very fortuitously. The parents were school-teachers and there was a girl, Anne-Marie, exactly my own age.

But the great advantage of staying with the Desgranges was that they lived in Gentilly, a suburb of Paris about three metro stops out of the city in the ligne de Sceaux. Their house was small but it had a large garden and we managed very well for the six weeks of our visit. Grandmother and I shared a small bedroom and she never went into the city at all, but spent her time sitting outdoors under a shady tree. The garden was wildly disordered and un-English, with fallen fruit from the trees lying about rotting and fermenting and attracting wasps, the flowers overgrown and unweeded and rampaging over the paths, lush and straggling everywhere with great tendrils and feelers. Grandmother appeared not to notice the chaos. I think she expected things to be different abroad and put every strange sight down to that one fact. She sat totally rapt in her own thoughts. I understood that this was her time for communing with Alfred, so long ne-

glected on her Sunday cemetery visits. I was sure she spent the days going over his life very slowly and repeatedly as if it were an erotic fantasy growing clearer or dimmer with each repetition until it worked itself out into nothingness. How did I know this? Did she say something? Speak of him? I rather think she never mentioned him at all.

My pleasures were entirely of the present and at first the simplest things excited me—all the smells and sounds of the little town. I loved going with Anne-Marie to the market and bringing home cheeses, fruits and breads, of kinds previously unknown to me and entirely delicious.

All of us who went to France for the summer were greedy for new sensations, ready to try everything with complete abandon. But there was something compulsive in our enthusiasm for the Boucher Chevalier. It was an act of defiance against Miss Marley and we ate the meat with a kind of anarchic freedom, regarding the experience as a magic sort of communion, eating, in an annual ritual of cleansing (or the reverse) the very horses we had spent the year trying to save. It was not the horse-meat we ate but the sweet ashes of revenge. I don't know how my grandmother would have reacted to the knowledge that most of the meat she was eating was, at my special request, horse-meat, because I translated it merely as "meat." As official translator I allowed myself considerable leeway and this practice worked out very happily and smoothed over many areas of potential embarrassment.

Grandmother's meetings with the family were limited to mealtime and enhanced by my adept translations. Before each meal I was sent to the garden with a small "aperitif" on a tray. This was much appreciated and I think Grandmother believed that "aperitif" was the name of a region like Bordeaux or Burgundy.

"Tell 'em I like that aperitif."

I relayed the message.

"*Ma grandmère aime bien l'aperitif. Elle veut encore.*" I myself refused the obviously alcoholic drinks, but I drank huge amounts of Vouvray, believing it to be a kind of French lemonade. I see now that it is entirely possible Grandmother and I were a little drunk most of the time, but if I felt dizzy I put it down to the sun. It may have been a little of both, for I over-exposed myself recklessly to the sun. The Desgranges family observed me with rapture.

"*Elle boit le soleil, la p'tite Anglaise.*"

They were proud of their sun. They loved to see us over-indulge and overeat and encouraged our shameless greed with cries of "*profitez-en!*" "*Profitez-en!*" I think they suspected that our normal life in England was a steady mortification of the palate, and perhaps they were right.

Fortified by quantities of aperitif, my grandmother enjoyed her food. Her table manners were not delicate, since she no longer had her own teeth. She pulled and gnawed at bread and meat in a way that caused my mother some alarm, and real anguish if they had to eat together in public places. There was oilcloth instead of a tablecloth at the Desgranges and when in our haste and hilarity we spilled a great deal of wine and water, we laughed and called ourselves "*la famille de la flaque d'eau à table.*"

I quickly learned to break off a lump of bread and mop up every scrap of delicious juice on my plate and so did Grandmother. She said,

"I like this gravy," and I translated,

"Ma grandmère adore la sauce. Elle trouve que c'est extrêmement délicieux. Délicieuse."

Immediately more would be poured onto her plate with elaborate gestures of goodwill and cries of *"profitez-en."* "No" was not taken for an answer. The horse-meat was very tender for my grandmother to chew and she asked to find out how they got it so soft. I was told,

"On le met dans une marinade de l'ail et de vin et de champignons pendant douze heures et puis. . . ."

"They soak it in wine". . . .

"Oh. Well, whatever they do, it's good. How do they get these chips so good?"

"They have olive oil in the chip pan, Granny."

"Oh."

"Ma grandmère trouve que la cuisine française est extrêmement délicieux. Délicieuse."

At the end of the meal, *digestifs* were produced and much enjoyed by my grandmother. Then she went to bed for a siesta after lunch and an early night after supper. Normally a fitful sleeper, she was sleeping soundly for long hours and thought that the climate suited her.

Anne-Marie and I, when our digestive systems had recovered from the onslaught of the last meal, went into the city. The Desgranges were very kind and constantly organized excursions. On Sundays we went on all-day outings to Fontainebleau and Versailles, and on weekdays we went into Paris to see Montmartre, Notre Dame, the Eiffel tower and the Louvre. But what I loved most were the times we sat in the late afternoon sun in some café along the Champs Elysées, sipping Vouvray, chilled and pétillant, and watching the people go by. It seemed that in this parade of cheerful, colorful holiday-makers I saw a panorama of my whole future life. There must have been passers-by on the boulevards who were not bright and young and carefree. After all, Paris is full of seamstresses, office workers, vagabonds, old people. I saw none of them. My eyes were only for young men in lederhosen; beautiful American women, expensively dressed and enameled; ugly American men with cropped heads like convicts or pin-feathered chickens but patently rich and self-assured. I watched the lovers at the surrounding tables, their arms loosely entwined. The rapt attention which they trained on each other was nothing to the fixity of the gaze I turned on them.

"Oh la la!" said Anne-Marie, "How you make big eyes at people! *Que tu écarquilles des yeux!*"

What a variety of possibilities of light and love and laughter were spread before me on those hot afternoons. I never wanted to stop looking. What were Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre to this?

And thus the summer passed swiftly. Fummer's leafe had all too fhort a date for me. Soon it was the end of August and Anne-Marie was seeing us off at the Gare du Nord, screaming as the train pulled out,

"Au revoir, Jeanne. A l'année prochaine! Bon courage pour la rentrée! Bon courage! Courage. . . . Courage!"

But the journey was not over. For my grandmother the

most important part came next. Or perhaps it was not the most important part. Possibly she had relived all her life with Alfred in that shady part of the Desgranges garden, reaching a kind of exultation with the aperitifs and the *digestifs* so that the visit to the grave itself was simply a formality, a leave-taking. I always puzzled about how it happened that we found the grave as we did. The farmer and his wife escorted us formally out there and it was always the same—quite well kept up but with weeds. I think that before we arrived they stopped weeding it so that my grandmother could have the satisfaction of pulling up some weeds and setting the grave to rights. She tidied it up and, having performed that ritual, left it for another year.

I was much fatter and very sunburnt and my mother looked at me with satisfaction and said,

"The change has done you good."

My jolly grandmother was jealous and said,

"If I had your Granny Parker's money, we'd go around the world. First class all the way."

Somehow that didn't tempt me. Paris was the utmost I yearned for. Already I was anxious about next year, for I never knew from one year to the next whether our excursion would be off or on.

My grandmother was not to be pressed on the subject and every Sunday I patiently accompanied her to the cemetery, carrying trowels, Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums, waiting for her mind to drift at last to the grave across the sea. Finally, during the daffodil season, it happened:

"We'll take 'em some bulbs, in t' summer."

On Monday I couldn't wait to see The Other Janet.

"Fair stands the wind for France, Janet."

"Oh, fuper, Janet."

And so another year turned and the summer came round again and we set off on our journey. My earlier sense of excitement had been replaced by something more satisfying. I was developing intellectual and aesthetic interests. I read a great deal of French history and French literature. The boulevards didn't lose their fascination for me, but I was now enthralled in a different way by Fontainebleau and Versailles. The paintings in the Louvre absorbed me and I stood in front of them for long hours in an ecstasy of concentration. Anne-Marie beside me was frantic with impatience,

"Always you stare and stare. *Tu veux boire les peintures? Oh alors, allons! Que j'ai soif. . . .*"

"Encore un moment, Anne-Marie, and we'll be off, but encore un moment. . . ."

I carried a notebook and wrote down all that I wished to remember. I wanted my impressions to remain as permanent as the epitaphs carved in marble on grave-stones. Today when I look at my jottings they read like haiku:

Le hameau de Marie-Antoinette,

Our picnic in the woods at Fontainebleau

Anne-Marie sitting on a nest of fourmi
My éclat de rire infuriates her

Jeanne, you never stop choking,
Always you choke. Oh la la!

La joconde not shown to advantage,
Glass frame, bad light, small in scale

A lovers' quarrel in the café on the Boul Mich
Andromache at the Comedie Française

Café au lait and croissants
Bright sun. A painting by Matisse

Anne-Marie tells me "Tu est grosse,
mais tu la portes avec beaucoup de grace." I'm livid.

Everyone tired and out of spirits,
The fruit rotten-ripe in the garden

The setting sun reminds Anne-Marie
Of a fromage Hollandaise. She lacks esprit

The fountains of Versailles,
The cobblestones of Fontainebleau

Spectacle de son et de lumière
at the Chateau de Sceaux

Ginkho trees at the Cité Université
feu d'artifice beyond the horizon.

Anne-Marie would never concede that my studies were as demanding as hers. It was a point of national honor for her to stress how much more difficult her examinations were, how remote the chance of her passing them. "Certainly, I shall not be received," she said when she spoke of them. She made great sweeping gestures with her arms to illustrate the height of the "niveau" and vast number of students who were not going to be received. Perhaps she was right, but I could not imagine anyone working harder than I was doing for the exams at the end of my final year. I had so much Latin and French and English and, if I failed, I should not be able to go to university. Even if I didn't fail, I might not do well enough to win one of the open scholarships. In that event, Oxbridge would be out of the question and I would have to go instead to one of the obscure redbrick universities in the provinces. I worked so hard that I had trouble sleeping and had a sick feeling always in my stomach. My mother watched me anxiously because some girls got "brain-fag" and had to give up.

I could think of very little besides the exams and when, one Sunday, my grandmother said,

"We'll take one of them urns next summer,"
I was pleased, but the summer seemed very far away. I tried in odd moments to lose myself in daydreams. I was suddenly uninterested in the Boys' Division and could not work up any enthusiasm for my Chosen One of the year. The population of desirable boys seemed to have diminished or passed on to Oxbridge.

I thought hopefully of France. I had read a book about two Oxford women who went to Versailles and met numbers of people dressed in old-fashioned, unfamiliar

clothes. Later, when they described their meetings to other people, they discovered that they had seen the gardeners and courtiers and characters of an earlier time. All their descriptions were checked and corroborated and proved correct. The women were highly reputable scholars. I didn't believe the account. It sounded too much like the kind of thing Janet and I would dream up, but I was still fascinated by it. I dreamed of going to Versailles and being mentally transported to a different age. When I read my French history books, I dreamed of meeting the people, and during the long bus rides to school I invented the accounts of these meetings.

If I could just survive the year of studying and the exams, everything would be fine. After France, there would be one more year at school, but it would be a relaxed year doing interviews at the various Oxbridge colleges, buying clothes and books in preparation for my new life ahead.

I did survive the year and the exams but only barely. I felt no immediate sense of relief when the last exam was finished and wondered if my uncertainty about the results was weighing on me. My mother was not unduly worried. She said, "You're run down from all the studying. The change abroad will do you good."

Even my grandmother came out of her own thoughts long enough to stare at me and say,

"Something's ailing you. What's the matter with you?" The Desgranges noticed the difference and said,

"Elle est souffrante, la p'tite anglaise. Elle est tout à fait énermée." They too had confidence in their sun, their food, their France. They brought colored drinks in little glasses the size of egg-cups and urged me to drink the full-bodied red wines. I did that, but nothing helped. I could no longer profit from any of it. There was something going wrong with my mind. When I walked to the market, instead of being delighted by the sights and smells, I noticed alarming sights that I had overlooked before. There were bullet-holes on many of the buildings in the village and there were signs:

ICI JEAN-LUC LEGROS EST TOMBÉ POUR
LA FRANCE
VICTIME DE L'OCCUPANT ALLEMAND

ICI, LE 5 SEPTEMBRE 1943, ANTOINE CALAMEL
EST MORT POUR LA PATRIE

These were memorials to young men who had been dragged out by the Gestapo while their families and friends and the villagers stood watching helplessly. Once in Paris, Anne-Marie said to me,

"Voilà la crematorium où les Boches ont tenu les patriotes pour enlever leurs yeux et leurs bras."

I did not need to jot these things in my notebook. I needed some way to erase them from my mind. They haunted me so insistently that when someone at the next table laughed suddenly and stridently, I jumped in my seat and wished them dead on the ground.

Even Versailles looked tawdry and fly-blown. The rooms were not peopled by La Pompadour and Du Barry but with the victims of the Ancien Régime. My imagina-

tion was crowded with scenes of cruelty and torture—the guillotine, the strappado, the garotte, the bastinado. . . .

The summer was not a success and when Anne-Marie saw me off, she didn't shriek as the train pulled out. She said to me very earnestly.

"Eh bien, ma gosse, ne t'inquiètes pas trop" . . . and hugged me with feeling, protectively. I cried all the way to Brittany. My grandmother, silent and unamazed, watched me.

She had her own thoughts. The War Graves Commission had asked to move Alfred's remains to one of the big military cemeteries where the white crosses marked an incredible number of anonymous dead. The family wanted her to agree to this transfer because they could use the land in the field now occupied by Alfred's grave. Finally Grandmother had consented and the body was to be disinterred.

One steamy morning we went out in a silent group to the field, Grandmother and I, the farmer and his wife, and the workmen who were to dig up the grave. We were fortified by café calvas and went in single file across the orchard. But when they dug in the ground, there was nothing there. No coffin, no bones, not anything at all. When Alfred had been blown up there had been nothing left to bury. If my grandmother was horrified, she showed no sign. We returned to the farm house, drank more café calvas, and then packed our bags and set off immediately for the boat train.

That was our last trip to France together. The following spring my grandmother died and was buried in the cemetery at home. I had suggested that she be cremated in the new crematorium and then scattered in Brittany near where Alfred had died, but my mother pooh-poohed the idea. She thought there had been altogether too much of this traipsing off to France on wild-goose chases after non-existent graves. She had not forgiven France for not sending me back recovered. She kept shaking her head and saying "I thought the change would do you good" as if the President of the Republic, the government and the people of France should all be sued for breach of promise. She said Grandmother should be buried like everyone else alongside her husband.

"But Alfred was the one she cared for," I said.

"Stuff," said my mother, "She couldn't abide him."

"What?" I cried.

"Oh, he was quiet and didn't have much go in him. She thought he was lazy and she was always after him. Anyway, that's water under the bridge by now."

I suppose she was right.

I did not, after all, return to the Bromleigh School for the autumn term. I passed all the examinations and won quite a substantial scholarship, but I couldn't face another year in school uniform. I might have done well in the Oxbridge entrance exams, but I decided instead to go to a redbrick university in a fairly big town in the midlands. My best marks were in French, but English was my first love and I decided to read English Literature.

At first I was disappointed with University life. Because of my last minute arrangements, I was not able to get into a hall of residence or to share a flat with another student. I ended up in digs in a semi-detached house at

the end of the bus route on the edge of the town. It was all a bit depressing with the slag heaps out the back window, the one bath a week, and the fish-paste sandwiches for high tea.

Nor did I really enjoy my studies. The lecturers were boring and the subjects dull. Really the only difference from school was that we were no longer sexually segregated, but this was not a marked improvement. The English department consisted overwhelmingly of female students. Of the men, not many were interested in women, and the few who were gravitated to the really attractive women, one of which I definitely was not. It was not at all what I had imaged in those dreams of May balls, strawberries and champagne, punting on the river.

One Sunday I went for a walk to get the taste of the greasy Sunday dinner out of my mouth. It was an overcast day and I ended up by the canal that ran through that part of town. Leaning over the bridge, I could see myself mirrored in the water, a rippling mirage in a fawn duffel coat. Suddenly a coal barge came under the bridge, manned by a fat barge-woman in a black pinafore and pixy hood. She looked back at me as the barge moved along, and suddenly in a completely spontaneous gesture she stuck out her tongue at me as far as it would go. It was a startling act and I understood that there was nothing personal in it. So I stuck out mine as far as it would go too. Not at her, of course, any more than she had done at me. I was saying,

"Yah, old bargee, that's the way I feel, too."

I watched her until she was out of sight and then went back to the digs for the fish-paste sandwiches, or maybe it was a Sunday treat like baked beans on toast.

Perhaps my first year of University, though, was just a period of recovery and adjustment. I worked as a waitress during the summer and the second year I was admitted to a Women's Hall of Residence. Life again assumed a certain dignity. There were formal dinners in Hall, all of us gowned for the occasion; sherry with the Matron and Warden of the Hall before Sunday lunch; visiting faculty members to dinner. . . . I had a pleasant study overlooking the grounds and beyond that I could see sheep grazing in green fields. It was very charming and bucolic. I enjoyed my fellow students and also, at this time, I fell in love with my Tutor. I suppose this sounds half-baked and adolescent (he had married a student some years earlier and was already raising a second family) but it was not. It gave me a sense of euphoria and buoyed by this I regained my passion for literature and life. When I took my finals, I did exceptionally well. Even though I did not have one of the prestigious Oxbridge degrees, I did well enough to find a job in a school as prominent as the Bromleigh School. It was not physically as impressive as the Bromleigh, but I liked the students and staff and enjoyed being on the other side of the educational process. The Other Janet had left Oxbridge before she graduated in order to get married. She was vastly amused at the thought of me as a teacher, and sent me a congratulatory message which said:

Three cheerf on your Pofition.

(Render unto Cefar that which is Cefar's). □

TWO STORIES

BETH BROWN

1. The Wire

*You travel in cities
that travel in you,
lost in the ache
of knowing none.
—Jay Wright*

If he had tried to hold her, she would have pushed him away and turned back to the window. She could keep her distance all the way to Boston, posing and profiling, crossing and uncrossing her legs like a model. She had insisted on the seat next to the window and leaned against the side of the car. *Don't touch me for awhile.*

The train ripped past a junkyard—fifty, maybe sixty twisted cars heaped on a lot, rust-covered with their seats split wide open. The bare steel of buses seemed to smoulder in decaying light. She felt heavy as the train; she weighed tons.

He had almost put his arm around her but caught himself. He stared out of her window instead, watching everything he knew about America glide by. (*You should be proud of this country*, she told him, *your parents willed it all to you.*) But she agreed to meet them. (*Duke and Duchess of Cambridge*, she called them.) He glanced at her beside him to make sure she was still there. He did not want to turn his head toward her so he peeked out the corner of his right eye. All he could see were her dark fingers curled around the journal she was reading.

Trenton. He turned and spoke for the first time since they had left Philadelphia. *You could at least talk to me when we get to Princeton Jct.* (*White rationale*, she thought, *him begging for time—postpone the inevitable.*). Half the people in

their car exited to the platform. The train shuddered then started moving again. Vapor obscured the window. She would not answer. In her eyes, he was dying of a number of illnesses, all of them diagnosed in her pique. Her stiffened withdrawn posture in the seat made her ache fiercely with cricks and creaks all over her nineteen-year-old body. For the first time in her life she sensed the approach of old age.

They had spent two hours in Terminal Market waiting for the train. It was a safe place to quarrel—big, anonymous. A choking mist rose from the sawdust on the floor. They saw white slabs of flounder, whole trout (that one watery eye pounced on them, followed them), pink piles of shrimp, ribs, candy, radishes, cans of tuna wedged into ice. She was suspicious and interrogating, firing questions at him. *A trip to Boston? A weekend with your parents? What do you mean you don't know what they'll say? I suppose we'll sleep in the guest room . . . is that what you really think?* He swallowed his answers. *You never told them I'm black and we're gonna walk in, just like that?* He shuffled beside her like a scolded puppy.

Well, I think you should meet them. I mean, what do we care what they think? Besides, we'll clear up any misunderstanding . . .

Don't you know they'd rather die before they give us any



peace? I can hear your mother now. "Over my dead body you'll marry that schwartze!" And you're so goddamn pale everyone in HERE is staring at us! No one noticed them until she started shouting.

Innocence, she said when they reached Princeton Junction. The train stopped. Her voice was barely audible over the hiss of the brakes. *You are so innocent*, she continued without turning her face from the window. She pointed in the direction of the university. *I used to know some people there.*

Who?

Students. My age. One in particular. Aren't you satisfied? You will be when we get to Boston. You'll be disowned, not me. Why don't you forget me?

I don't want to. I keep tellin you they aren't those kind of people. They aren't really rich—just well-off. She winced at his words, realizing how important the differences were between them, more significant than she ever wanted to believe.

The first time they walked together in his neighborhood suddenly everyone was in the street. He lived behind the art museum on north 20th between the parkway and the puerto ricans. The 20th and Shamokin gang challenged his right to walk their turf. He kicked at the newspapers blowing toward him while they imitated his casual stroll, almost jeering him off the sidewalk. *Why did you ignore them? Who? Them. I didn't want to hear it. What? Their talk. Hey, I was cool and they didn't bother us.* She was glad they were safe but she had wanted to see him fight them, all ten of them, to prove something. She told him his deafness was congenital and hereditary. He ignored her, too.

Later she wanted to spend the night. They argued. She talked of passion. He defended his ideals, one of which was love. His words became philosophy. Their discussion of the ethics of sex left her exhausted but he had won. They remained in their separate moral spheres. She said she would sleep on a blanket on the floor. When he turned off the light she lay down beside him. He reached for her, whispering incoherent phrases, kissed her a couple of times. In the semidarkness, she could see him smiling. She pressed closer, twining her arms around him and suddenly his face turned blank. He soured. Then he was hostile. He leapt from the bed and stood over her clenching his fists. *If you really understood me you wouldn't want those things.* He almost threw her out. She begged to sleep on the floor.

She wanted to tell him: *You have a terrible cancer*, but she knew what she would really say. She'd only whine: *I'm lonely*. When she woke up she acted as if the argument had not occurred. *I hope you feel better this morning. Will I see you again this week?* She called him when she felt like killing herself because his voice touched her emptiness.

When his friends asked about her he always said he loved her, he could drink her a sip at a time. They watched him jump for her—from the top of his curly jewish afro to the toes of his muddy boots—for anything she wanted. But he touched her only in his fantasies when he could not tell exactly what was going on—whether he was on top of her, whether he satisfied her or not. The thought of making love with her filled him with a mixture

of anticipation and fear. He tried other ways of pleasing her.

He took her to an expensive restaurant. Their nervous waiter fumbled the tray on his shoulder and spilled everything. She saw by the candlelight clumps of string beans, New England clam chowder, biscuits and sirloin tips. The waiter was young and thin—all pale skin on awkward bones—nearly sobbing when he bent down to clean up the accident. She surmised he was a virgin and a jew, a cherub, rosy-cheeked as Jesus on a postcard. She trained a trouteye on him as he stooped in the shadows. She found his blameless manner attractive. The headwaiter came over panting like an engine and cursed him. It was soft but she could hear it. Her lover picked at the bread and butter on his plate.

Hungry winter birds shot erratically over the fields, over rushes and pale blue patches of ice. Shadows broke against the brownstones crowded along the embankments. Heads tilted back, they sank deeper into their seats, aroused by each other's presence and breathing a little fast. Their two solitudes were throttled toward New York: hers a thick, black puddle of oil, his a wet spot of semen on a sheet. Cell by cell she was drawing away to wrap her skin around her like a cocoon. He reached for her hand, four fingers cupped, caressing with his thumb. She snatched her hand away.

Do I know you at all? Do I really? He choked on every word. *It's not as if you haven't been honest with me.* The magazine fell off her lap and slapped the floor.

It's not you, it's not me. It's a lot of things.

What things?

You said it yourself once—those things—remember? The things I wouldn't want if I really knew you.

Pounding on doors was all she could think of. Pounding on doors until her fists were bloody, her throat screamed out. She calmed with a weary smile.

She had brought her heart like a brokewing bird in a shoebox to his room across from the police station where he sat picking his banjo. In one corner of his room sat a square old trunk, the shape of a dwarf's coffin, spilling a worn-out leather glove, a suede coat, shirts, socks, and a mask. Canvases of nudes were stacked in the corner—old women with starved, sagging bellies. It was the models he feared most about art school, he told her. He had never before seen a naked woman.

He was playing a Spanish fandango, touching the strings with a solid gold pick. A rope was stretched across his bedroom with clothespins holding his designs for an alphabet book for children. Seven verbs in red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. Add. Blow. Cut. Draw. Eat. Fish. Glue. He was seeing his mother's agent in the morning.

He painted her with an eye for natural light playing on her brown skin. She posed until she thought her bones would crack. He dropped the dirty brushes and confronted her with her likeness: blackwoman, pensive in red, big thighs spread in her chair. She marveled at the pinks and greens he swore he saw in her complexion. She kissed him and they skipped out the door. They were together again in the street, the glossy pavement that shone like a mirror in the dark, reflecting their faces—a

moon and a shadow. He looked over his shoulder for the puerto rican gang. She reached out of her misery toward him, grabbing his arm as they crossed the street. He thought she loved him because of this simple gesture. It was enough for him. He took her to a film so they would have something to talk about afterward at her place, instead of arguing about sleeping together.

They saw "The Last Detail." As they walked out of the theater, he put his hand on her buttock. She thought he wanted her. A chill tickled up her spine into the base of her neck. That night he lay in her bed watching her take off her clothes. He promised her it would be beautiful, everything she had always wanted. She crawled into his arms, her smooth skin prickled by the coarse hair on his chest. She split her legs and sighed.

New York. He let her out to go to the toilet. Everyone she passed was asleep. When she locked the john door the light buzzed on. Under the neon she was green, her neck a bit shorter in the distorting glass. She leaned over the basin toward her reflection, not liking what she saw—the surface of her face, her love of art, her gestures. The night in her bedroom flashed before her eyes, a recurring daydream full of vivid detail and sensation. She remembered his organ felt cold and wooden inside her. He had laughed and rocked her with grunts and jerky hips until he became tired and then pushed her away. She rested beside him brokebodied and sore. And she appeared in the daydream as an outside, a voyeur, entering and surprising them, terror gripping her insides, and screaming . . . While she wept the john fan rattled above her.

The conductor took a piece of ticket while you were gone. Again she settled in the seat beside him, staring out at lights embedded in the steel of bridges. She thought she saw them, him and her, carved out of the raw materials of the world they now shared: scrap iron and electricity,

clay, the exhaust of turnpikes, turpentine, clothed in costumes from his antique trunk. He wore the costume of hands. The laugh was in his trunk, the laugh chosen especially for her: the laugh of him advancing, one hand in his pants clutching his manhood. The greasepaint of fear was smeared on his forehead when he nudged her below the navel and washed her out of his mouth with water. He troubled her sleep like a bad dream and twisted her in his arms, kneading her like dough, as he dragged her up out of the audience onto the stage to be humiliated. She picked up the magazine.

You can't read on the train. It'll give you a headache. Listen, why don't you quit kvetching and tell me what's bothering you? Greenwich. The train slowed and stopped on a bridge. Everyone in the car joined in silence, waiting. Something was menacing, popping loudly like a whip. It was as cruel a sound as any they had ever been afraid of. She looked at him wondering if he would try to protect her.

It's a high tension wire down across the track, he said. It seemed quite close to the other side of the train, the side away from them. *Don't touch anything metal.*

I guess we'll be here for awhile. She slowly opened her magazine. *Whiteloverman,* she thought, *does it have to be with you?* He pressed her leg against hers.

She turned toward him: *I don't want anymore of your dinners, your flicks, your pictures, or jiveass you.* She forgot about the wire and leaned back toward the window. *There's a part of me that will always hate you.* He tried to pull her toward him. *The part that don't die.*

Backward in night to the source of steel and rock. Toward the steaming mound of New York City. Eight or nine miles ahead the frayed wire, swinging wildly from its pole, hissed and writhed in the dark spilling blue sparks like blood. □

2. Jazzman's Last Day

Bloodeye rises over a structure of bones. It is the jazzman's last day. As the mattress springs back to its original shape, he is revving up his shaver. The blue cold of morning is breaking away at 10 p.m., and the temperature rising to 35 still degrees. Under the ice, the sea at the waterfront swings out and throttles back in a great circle of tension and intentionality, going nowhere. Snowstorms blowing in off the coast threaten to eat the city. Most of Tuesday is still a possibility. There may be an earthquake or a tidal wave, muses the jazzman, patting lukewarm water on puffy eyes.

Every man's wetdream: Bess is on her way over. He hangs up the phone. Bess could be a mechanical doll, the way she makes her voice clipped and monotoned when she

calls. It's her way of taking care of business. But he knows she'll run in out of the storm like a wild orange bird, reeking of Avon, to ask him first of all for stockings. He laughs so hard at the thought of her, he has to lie down for a minute. Most evenings, he can count on her to be waiting in the back of the club for him to finish the gig so she can drink his money. She turns heads, gets top dollar from that sonofabitch clubowner, warms his walkup like a heater at night. Worth every nickel, says the jazzman.

Blow *truth*, baby! A name like Truth is a burden. He earned the name one night in the last high screaming notes of a 5-minute solo when he was soaking his shoes in sweat and the walls slapped his improvised melodies back and forth until he could've wrapped that whole room in

sound and stuck it under his arm like a birthday present for his old lady. A man in the front row yelled Blow truth baby. The same man became his agent for a month until he faded out with all the bills he could stuff into his pockets. The jazzman still has those posters with JIMMY "The Truth" JACKSON printed at the top and a picture of him with his trumpet in his left hand disappearing around a streetcorner followed by a droophead stray dog.

His dreams still play the time when he picked up the broad with the wired bra when the zipper on his pants stuck, before Bess the posters and marquee lights and a chance to make it. He could shuffle the deck & pull the aces or sneak a sevenspade out of his jacket and lay down hand after winning hand. He'd walk for blocks, cutting a path in the crowd with the smooth roll of his stroll, the smell of his cologne and his old lady's hips. When he picked up his trumpet & licked his lips, a huge ball, deep blue, of silence would explode in a room packed with audience.

Bird's silence. Between his lips and the mouthpiece. A waste of that shapeless stuff. No audible breathing in the room except his slowintake broke the air. The smoke from cigarets and roaches paused in gray & blue clouds around faces that melted into one giant listening ear. He would try to reach the corners of the room, rock the spiders down and weave his sound into their webs. He could play with that silence by rolling it into a bluer, smaller ball & balancing it between his lips and the mouthpiece. Or he would swim in it like a wave. He waited, made them wait, waited with them, to begin. . . .

2. The snowstorm clogged the transit system above ground. People are walking sideways into the wind clutching at scarves. Jimmy pushes downtown. White people are black outlines traced on the snow. Dark wanderers stand at their feet like blackbirds begging crumbs with the pigeons. There isn't anyplace to go or anything to do except fight the cold and dance on the

ice. Afternoon light leans on the buildings spilling gray ashes of shadows to the street. Land smells of waste & tears. There are no special provisions for the jazzman's life in any of these buildings: no offices, no BUREAU OF THE JAZZMAN'S FATE. Nothing but welfare and the foodstamp lines. A woman with a mouth like a hot spot of red sealing wax is waiting for her phone to ring & drinking her fifth cup of the black coffee people are always singing about, hoping Jimmy will make it over & they'll get into something. Hoping the Truth will stop in.

3. For the jazzman, evening has always been a wail growing softer and lower as the night progresses, diminishing to a moan. Morning is mute. Light only sobs. The reflections off his trumpet have the only human voices & he can speak with them in fast riffs which take all night of sitting on the edge of his bed with his trumpet in his hands to understand. He is pleased with himself when he finishes practicing. It is the only schooling he will ever obtain, outside of the Lessons & Conversations with master musicians after gigs when he is taught how to hope. The master's task doesn't require many words—the right gesture will say everything. The masters showed him how to bring his trumpet to his lips & pause, filling a room with the blue ball of anticipation.

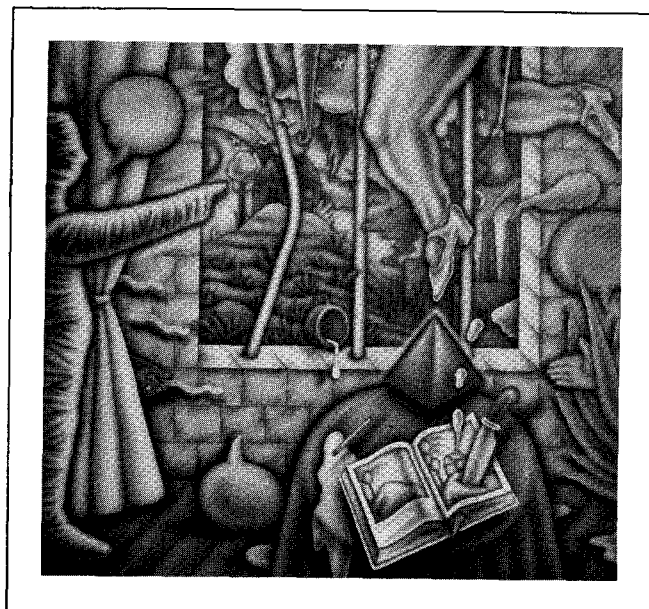
Bess doesn't come to this restaurant. Jimmy is avoiding her. Midnight walk smokestack talk. The sky is stitched with a legacy of birds moving out of sight into darkness. The sounds of the night are rich with speech. Neon signs keep up their end of the conversation with short, pastel exclamations.

What else is there to do but lay out the choices? Years of speaking emotions & ideas make it easier for him to listen to unspoken messages that bend his blood backward in his veins like dark portwine. The thought of his body buckeyed on some street corner flashes like a news item for Tuesday: death of an epigram child of a wombless mother.



THE SERVICE

ELIZABETH COLLISON



I call the caterers on Monday. It is six months to the day that William left and I have to admit then it is probably true, I will not have anyone to talk to at dinner again tonight. And when I decide I am tired of having dinner alone, I have had enough of eating in my kitchen standing at the counter with the radio turned up loud, I call the caterers. That is, I call their service and I say look, I want you to send me two of your caterers for a small party Tuesday of next week. And the service says yes all right and how many will we be serving madam and I say well one actually but if we count the caterers then three. So yes, three, I say, there will be three, please tell the caterers I want them to come for dinner. And the service says very good and will there be anything else and I say yes, please tell the caterers I would like them to talk. It would be very nice if they would tell a few stories.

And so on Tuesday when I get home from work I smell fresh garlic which is odd I cannot help thinking. So hello? I say and a fellow with dark hair and a center part leans out from the kitchen and oh hello, he says, and looks happy I am home.

Well I cannot leave it at that of course so I am going to ask can I help him, is there something he wants, and what is it he is doing in my kitchen? But already he is gone and from what sounds like the inside of my refrigerator he is calling do we have a lemon? We need a lemon.

Now I still want to know what he is doing in my house, I intend to be firm, but I am also pretty sure we have a lemon so I say try the tupperware, in the tupperware, in the back. But when I reach the kitchen he has already found it, the lemon I mean, and he is opening top drawers looking for a knife. I help, as I am not sure where I saw one last. I find a grapefruit peeler mixed in with the stainless steel and ask will this do and he says yes, he thinks so and gives me a big smile like it's ok I only have a grapefruit knife. And I think then maybe I should explain, I should tell him normally I have more, but William took all the good knives when he left, William was a fool for knives, he was always ordering them from catalogs. But I don't say that. What I say is listen do I know you?

He looks surprised and a little hurt like I could have

found some better way of putting it and I'm sorry then I asked though I don't say that either. And he doesn't say anything so it is quiet for a while. And then he hands me a small card, "Hall & Lish—Caterers" it says, and I remember then this is Tuesday.

So I think of course, I have caterers in my house, well that clears up some things. But I am wondering now which this is, Hall or Lish, and Lish, I decide to say to him, except then the toilet flushes and what must be the other one, a large bearded fellow with wooly hair, comes toward us down the hall. He's still working with his fly and doesn't see me at first, but then oh hello he says and smiles and I can tell he too is glad to see that I am home. And isn't it nice, I can't help thinking, to have someone happy you've come home—if not William, someone, though sometimes I still think it will be William, I will open the door and he will look up and see me and he will smile and smile.

But now the dark haired caterer is pouring me a glass of wine and saying here, you sit here. So I take the wine and I have a seat and I think how they have gone all out, these caterers, we are using the linen napkins, my good china and I cannot help liking them for it. I am going to tell them just that I think and so Lish, I say to the wooly one, he looks like the Lish of the two. But I do not finish because just then the dark haired caterer brings on the first course, a minestrone, the bowls are steaming and smell of basil and so let's eat he says.

The wooly one does not hear me say Lish, he is excited now and says how they thought we should eat Italian tonight, seeing as my name's Braccini, the service said it was Braccini. And then they both toast me; my Italian blood.

Actually I am Irish, English-Irish, it is William who is the Braccini, I only still have his name. But as I do not want to dampen anyone's spirits here, I do not want to cancel anyone's menu, I raise my wine. I try to think of something Italian to say. I decide it no longer matters which is Lish. What matters, I think, is William. But I do not say that, I just say well yes, let's eat.

And then the dark haired one is quiet, he is leaning

forward over his soup and I can tell he has something to say. You see, he says, he used to sell shoes and that was all right but he can tell me one thing about catering for sure, it can be very educational.

I am glad to see we have something to discuss here, so Oh? I say. And the wooly one says yes, it can teach you about people.

And I say oh? again and the wooly caterer says yes again, and for instance did I know you can tell a lot about a person by his kitchen?

I say no, but now that I think about it, that doesn't surprise me a bit. And I say people are always telling a lot about other people by the way they organize closets or the paper they choose for their walls.

But the wooly one says no, as a caterer, you really can tell. You have no choice. You sauté mushrooms on their ranges, you serve their bridge group stuffed crab, you can't help it, you hear things, you see things.

And I am wondering then what they already know of me, what character defects can they spot here in this dinette. And do they know then about William? But I don't ask because I do not want to encourage them, already the topic depresses me. So I think I will change the subject, I will say there was a bombing today, La Guardia Airport, dissident Basques. I will bring up some current event, but it is too late, the dark haired caterer is saying yes, you see things. And he nods and says like with the couple on Weber we catered for once.

And I say well small world, I know people on Weber. But the caterer doesn't ask who, he just says how the first time was when they catered a buffet for the woman. She was a harp player, he says, the party was to send her off, that's all they talked about, her friends and the woman. How she was going to accompany Wayne Newton, a full symphony back-up. It was going to be at Caesar's Palace and it had gone to her head you could tell.

And the wooly one says yes, he remembers. They served Lamb Moutarde and what a great showman that Wayne is, the harp player kept saying. It got on his nerves, the wooly one says, all through the broccoli and capers, the carrot timbales, Wayne Newton, Wayne Newton. And all the time the husband not saying anything.

I realize here it is not the people on Weber I know, and for no particular reason I think then about William and how on summer nights we used to go out walking and William would sing to me, Land of the Gay Caballero mostly, though once it was an Irish song about love and William's voice was fine and clear.

And the dark haired caterer says then six months later we're called back to the same address on Weber and no big surprise the man is having another party only this time they are all his friends. She is not there and we see the harp is gone and also the microwave oven. The man tells us she's moved to Las Vegas, she plays the casinos.

I think then maybe I will give William a call. I will excuse myself and hello William, I'll say, do you remember how you used to sing to me?

And the wooly caterer says so there you are, things change. And the dark haired one says yes, you wake up one morning and you're out a microwave, she's moved to Las Vegas.

And I say well I suppose you learn those things. And though I think now we have covered the topic, the wooly one says yes, you do and I can tell he has another story.

There was this old couple we catered for, he says. The woman was too old to fix big family dinners and so whenever it got near Thanksgiving or Christmas, the old man would call the service and say how he was planning a surprise, how he wanted us to surprise Mother, he called his wife Mother, how he would like us to come and do a big turkey for the family that weekend.

And the dark haired one says how for three years the service sends someone to surprise Mother. And the great thing is, he says, she always is surprised, she always lets us take her by surprise, and oh Walter, she says every time, and touches the old guy on his cheek.

But last Christmas, the wooly one says, just about the time we're expecting a call, we see in the paper the woman has died and then we don't hear from the old man, he just disappears and we think maybe someone in the family is cooking the turkey.

I ask so did he die too? Did they go together?

No, the wooly one says, because then Easter comes around and we get a call. It's the old man and he says he wants us to come surprise Mother. Like she'd never died or anything.

And the dark haired one shrugs and says we're booked that weekend, so we don't go. And besides, he says, it's sick. The woman's dead.

And then the wooly one says they get another call at Thanksgiving, but he stops there because he remembers we have a main course. And he jumps up and pretty soon he is back with veal scallopini, trenette con pesto. And the dark haired caterer takes the veal and passes it to me and says well, you just learn things is all. You spend time in people's kitchens and you can see some things coming. And now he wants to tell about a couple on Franklin.

I do not know anyone on Franklin, I still want to know about the old man. And I think these caterers are costing me money, they should finish their stories.

But the dark haired caterer is too quick for me. He is already on Franklin, the couple on Franklin. The woman's husband was a big contractor he is saying, he built condominiums on the south side of town. And the woman used to call us every time her husband won a new contract, she used to throw a big party and we would come and always she would tell us do the salmon mousse, a salmon mousse with slivered almonds on the top.

I try to think what I can add, what I can say on the topic of almonds. But there is nothing so I think about William again, how I could call him and say well but William do you remember, I sang to you too? And I think how we would sit in the middle of the bed late at night and eat cold cereal and milk, and I would sing all the fight songs I knew in college, all the big ten, every one to him. And when I had no more songs, he would tell about when he was in college, how he tried to get girls to sleep with him but they never would and he was afraid he'd end up an orthodontist. And I laughed and said yes, tell me everything William. Let's tell each other everything. And I lay with my head on his chest and listened to him talk, I loved to feel the sound of him. And I thought then it

RICHARD KATROVAS

CRIMES

Four years ago, when you were *coming out*,
I stood one morning in Jackson Square
and pleaded with the God of Pure Motives
to send a cleansing rain. The clockwork showers
of early summer came only and I sliced a path
through that ordinary thunder
and my punk heart found the watermark
of its mercy. You did not know then
I regarded you as the other half
of something only a woman could love.
Friend, I cannot say I've touched you
through her or that I may ever touch you.
What moves in her moves me
and what moves in me moves nothing.
What moves in you is the heart of this city
and she is the heart of this city.
That over the years, after nights of dancing,
you've held each other and slept with your clothes on
frightens me. Such love is a mystery
and I am a fool for mystery.

*In the neuter, pale hour
of the redoubling footfall,
when he who has never danced
awakens in Exchange Alley,
his brain crisp and flaking,
any woman, girl or boy
is ground to powder.
That I would kill that man,
press my thumbs to his throat
till he changed to the color
of a dawn sky, is another kind of mystery.
I would then gather the limp hulk
into my arms and waltz it to Lake Pontchartrain.
I would then lie down with it on the muddy bank,
fold its head into the crook of my arm,
stroke the greasy hair, and sleep.*

Our most passionate crimes are perpetrated in Heaven,
and the last morning stars are vigilantes that will return.

After four years I return,
and when she is not drunk past dreaming
the only woman I've ever held all night
bolts upright, gasping.
The nightmare is not altered in the dream.
You, when no other man could touch her,
touched her. Danced her into exhaustion
so she could sleep. I shall take you in my arms,
Brother, Sister to my lover, and there will be no mystery.

would go on forever. If we just lay still like that we would go on forever.

But the dark haired caterer is saying how when the interest rate went up and people stopped building condominiums, the service didn't hear from the woman anymore until one day she called again and said would we come for one more party please and would we do the salmon mousse?

So we come, the wooly caterer says, and right in the middle of dinner, we are serving the leeks vinaigrette, the husband gets up from the table and says that to tell the truth, he has always hated the thought of salmon mousse and we hear then by the grapevine in two days he is gone.

The bearded caterer shakes his head at that and the dark one gives a little laugh but I want to know why didn't the builder say something, the woman could have ordered something else. He didn't have to leave, I say.

But the bearded caterer shakes his head like I haven't been listening and says no. Things change.

He has a point of course, but then I remember the old man and what about the old man, I want to know. Finish the one about the old man.

And the wooly caterer says oh well, like we said, everyone at the service knew the old guy was sick. Calling up and talking about Mother. Sick.

And I think about that, but then no, I say. And I say maybe he just loved her. Maybe he thought she might still be coming back.

And I say you don't know. Maybe the old man was on to something.

The bearded one laughs and says well yes maybe he was because when we get this call at Thanksgiving, he would like us to come surprise Mother, we think what the hell, we go. And we start the turkey and then the old man comes in and says he wants us to meet someone and there is this tall brown haired woman with her arm around him and he says to her Mother, these are the people who do our turkeys.

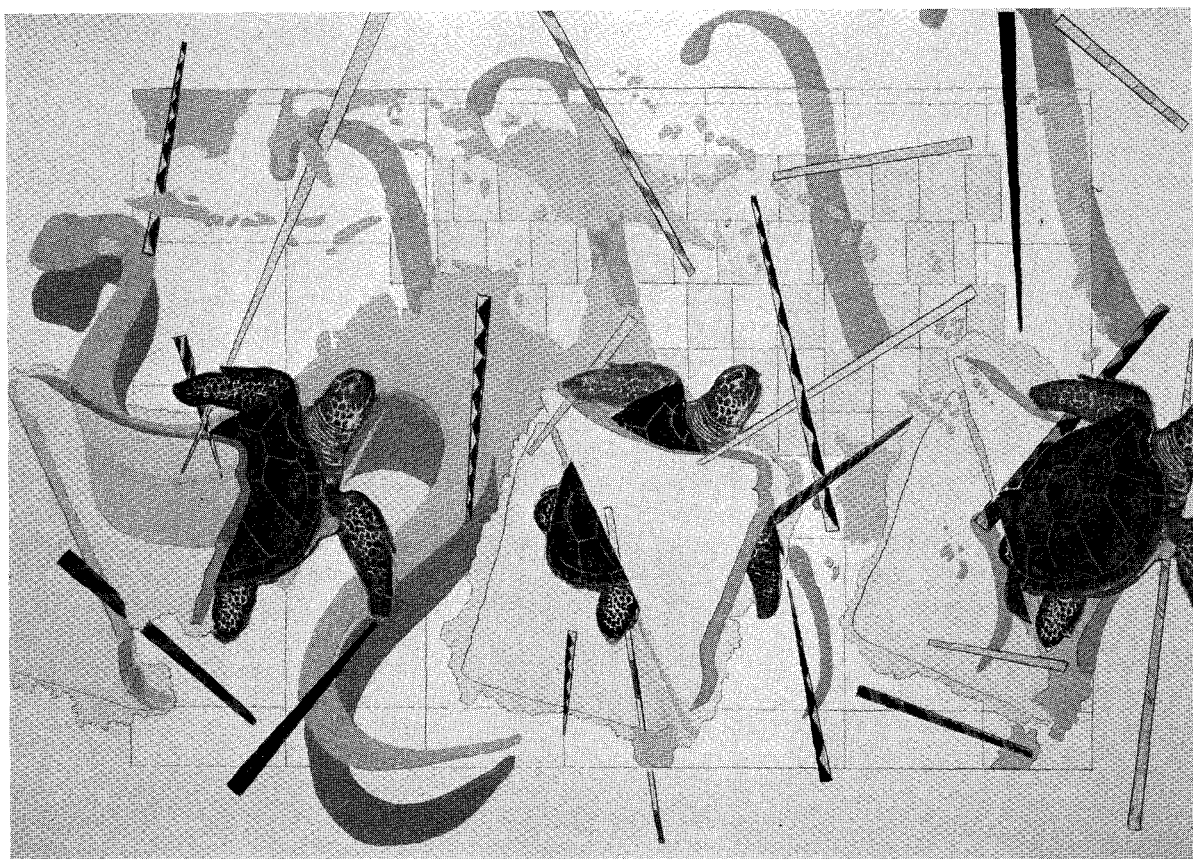
Mother, the wooly caterer says and laughs. The old guy called her Mother. He has a new woman, all the time we're worrying, he has this new woman but he's so used to the name, he just goes on calling her Mother. And he laughs and slaps his thigh and the dark haired caterer laughs and I have to admit I laugh a little then too. And for the third time tonight I think I should call William, William would like that story, he would laugh too and hello William I say but then I can't think why it is I've called and William isn't talking.

So the caterers and I have a good laugh and I think how we must do this again, we must have dinner like this again sometime soon. How maybe I will call the service for next Tuesday, I could call the service every Tuesday, we could have dinner every week. And then I think how after the caterers I could call a plumber, he could stay for dinner. And after the plumber there could be electricians, maybe a TV repairman, carpenters, someone from Roto Rooter. And they can all have dinner and tell me stories, there will be no end to the stories.

But I don't say that to the caterers of course. I just shake my head and say how well, guess the joke's on me, I thought it could go on forever. □

MARIA THOMAS

SILVER SUGAR FROM BOMBAY



The woman wants to go to Canada but she has no passport and no way of getting one. She can't get out of Tanzania without one and she can't, obviously, get into Canada without one either. "Why is the world like this?" she asks. "It's a terrible problem. They say I am not citizen. Maybe I am not human being?" She has a cloudy and drifting eye and a habit of tugging on her saree. The thin cloth flutters nervous answers to her questions: all negative. "If I was not born here, how did I come here?" She claims there is no record of her immigration, no previous citizenship to hang on to. "I was inside my mother's body is the reason why." Worse yet, there is no record of her birth. "They forgot to register," she explains. "But I was born, I assure you." This is not said as a joke: her bad eye is glazed with tear like egg in aspic.

The woman with her clucks in sympathy. She stirs (I count them) five heaping teaspoons of sugar into her tea. Delicately, she pours a little into a saucer making room. She has pushed her cakes away; gaudy awful things iced in pink and green. Everyone knows these cakes are not made with butter. "Toooooooo sveeeeeeet!" the woman giggles. A black waiter who's been watching moves in for the cakes, but she stays his hand. "No!" she tells him. "*Hapana chukuwa.*" Pulled tight as elastic, the saree edge

presses into the proud folds of brown flesh at her waist. Her fat is no worry. "Oh, such a bad taste!" she says. "What do they use in them?" She dabs her mouth with a napkin.

I watch them and eavesdrop, impolite as it is. They either don't notice or don't care. We're all in this together, nothing to do, lingering over tea at the hotel.

"I went to Indian High Commission. They asked me, 'Are you Indian citizen?' Look what you see, I told them. You see an Indian, isn't it? They only want to see papers."

"What to do? What to do?" the other asks. She's managed to eat the cakes and is pouring more tea. Her moving arm stirs the fat at her midriff, opens deep creases of secret stuff there, rich, dark, and oily and on the swell of it a bloom of peach, rolls like chocolate butter frosting on pink angel cake.

"When I went to the Tanzanians, they are also asking if I am citizen. Where is your visa? Where are your working papers? So dangerous, I'm telling you. I ask them does a person born here need working papers? But will they believe it?"

"They cannot believe," the other one, beefing up the tea with spoon after spoon of sugar. "Ack, this sugar is no good. Look how dirty!"

"They are telling me I can't work. If I can't work, how do I live?"

"You cannot live."

The woman who wants to go to Canada is a resident at the hotel. Her room is next to mine. In the few days I've been here, I've noticed constant activity in there. Something is always going on in that room. Things break in there. Things go wrong. Already repairmen have been up three times to fix the air conditioner. The phone company has been around twice. Two painters arrived with buckets and brushes and stayed a few hours. Plumbers came: I heard the water running, the toilet flush. A carpenter showed up. I heard hammering. This morning waiters from the hotel restaurant carted out a small refrigerator and carted in another small refrigerator—a newer one. The woman really lives in that room, a resident.

The hotel, in fact, is full of people like her—Indians who only look like Indians, who have no papers, no place to go. The entire clientele goes under the same few names—Singh, Patel, Chandra, Gandhi. Looking at the register is like reading the aliases of the unimaginative or the guest list at the reunion of some enormous biblical family. It's an Indian exodus: they've sold their houses, their belongings, and now they're waiting to get out, waiting for visas to England, Canada, the United States. They've seen some grim racial slurs in the handwriting on the wall.

The two women finish their tea, fidget all that material around into the right places and prepare for the standing position. They smooth yards and yards of it into straight pleats, fluted columns to the floor, flesh rolling under it as they stand. Each one tosses a long free end of saree over a shoulder. The fluttering silks wave as if part of the farewell ritual. "I will beg the Indian High Commission. I am Indian, you are only to look at me. Give me a paper and I promise I won't go to India. . . ." passing heavily behind me then on the way out, their perfumes and the soft push of their cloths. Long thick braids trail across the back of my chair.

Her name is Leela and she's a Patel. We see each other in the hall and the restaurant so often that we finally have to speak. To tell the truth, I was trying to avoid it. Could it be that in the short time I've been here, I've picked up an East African aversion to these people from India? They call them "Asians" around here and it's not a very nice word, removes them handily to the East but doesn't really locate them anyplace special. A lump-ugly word, it strips them of their origins, their countries, their languages, their ways. "Asians," as though someone decided long ago that they didn't belong anywhere and never would. Even to me, they seem an intrusion in Africa.

It's awful to say this but at first these brown people seemed like exotic curiosities and tourist attractions, rather than real honest to God human beings. Hadn't Leela herself asked the question: "Maybe I am not human being?" Maybe it was the clothes they wore, the jewelry, their extraordinary wealth of hair, the eye make-up, the dots on their heads and rings in their noses.

Maybe it was the incredible food they ate: it came in such outlandish colors, smelled of such a confusion of spices. Everything about them was rococo, like decorations on an outrageous monument. Even their English flipped and spun and trilled beyond baroque. And they led such elaborate teeming lives. Every morning their kids poured down into the hotel restaurant for breakfast like a warning sequence from a film pushing birth control. All dressed the same in their school uniforms like clones. And their fathers all the same, walking about in a mood of mechanized seriousness, as hard and deliberate as machines, while their mothers all buzzed like summer gardens. They seemed churned out past individuality, past problem, past emotion.

Africans seemed more real to me. After all they were the people I had expected. Besides, I had grown up looking at black faces all my life. I certainly did not grow up looking at women who wrapped themselves in yards and yards of silk, put bright dots on their heads and rings in their noses. Or men who wore flapping pyjamas or enormous diapers. Or men, the Sikhs, who never cut their hair or shaved their beards but rolled it all, tied under turbans, the beard in two tight twists like basket handles choking under their chins and up their cheeks. One day, on the street, a turban fell to the wind and the Sikh's hair never seemed to stop, a thin slick rope of it, long, uncoiling, slithered like a snake, the tail of it on the ground as the Sikh arched and spun for the hat, grabbed sputtering and winding his hair again and again high on his head while the Africans stood around and laughed.

I heard stories of rapacious Asian materialism, about their hoards of wealth stuffed in mattresses or buried in the floors of their shops. The Africans plain want them to go away, but Asians are like a shameful addiction—no one is sure how it got started, how it got so out of hand or how to kick the habit. Asians run everything, build everything, fix everything. Africans resent it and want to be cured, but cold turkey is no fun. When Idi Amin threw all his Asians out of Uganda, everything with a motor broke down, including the sugar processing plant. East African scuttlebutt has it that these brown bastards took crucial little pieces from all the machines, pieces no African had known about, pieces the Asians kept secret. When there was no more sugar for his troops, Amin ended up inviting a bunch of Pakistanis in to get things going again. And the Pakistanis came! Asians will go anywhere.

Leela is having a tea party in her room to which I'm invited. She calls it "a professional ladies' tea" and it's on Saturday afternoon when everyone is off work. At the tea are Mrs. Singh, Mrs. Singh-Kalsi, Dr. Singh and her niece Mrs. Bardyal-Singh and two Mrs. Patels. There are two lawyers, an educator-writer, a medical doctor, an architect and an economist. Leela introduces me around as a journalist. Everyone seems to have a profession, like a Sunday hat. I'm suspicious. I know my introduction is spurious and Leela, who's passing herself off as an accountant is, I happen to know, a clerk at the local Peugeot dealer's. Leela is convinced that I will have lots in common with Mrs. Singh (educator-writer) and sits me next to her. The woman is thin, frail with very fair skin

and hair too black. Her beautiful pink saree is embroidered with white and yellow flowers. She looks ready to expire, whispers to me, "I admire you very much for your work. A journalist! It must be very exciting. Are you covering a story here?"

I tell her, "I'm looking for a story."

She says, "It's too quiet here. Nothing happens. Isn't that so?"

Leela comes forth with a tray of tea cups. Behind her one of the waiters from below brings a platter of savories which he places on her bureau. Everything looks crisp, fried balls and wedges: nothing has a real shape on that tray and most of it is in astonishing colors, the deep oranges and cadmiums of turmeric. There's an awesome smell of anise, cinnamon, cumin, of spices I have no names for, of rose waters and orange waters and the sharp tang of the fresh ginger she's put in the tea.

Mrs. Singh (educator-writer on my left) tells me Leela has borrowed the kitchen of Mrs. Patel (lawyer) to make all this stuff. "This is not from the hotel kitchen!"

"Leela is a wonderful cook," Dr. Singh says. "My husband is always asking me when Leela is coming to cook for us. She makes such marvelous sambals."

Leela, giggling, tells me, "When my parents were alive, we prepared the real vegetarian. In those days, we had sixteen, twenty different dishes on the table. You could get everything then."

They all nod. "It isn't so now," the lawyer says.

They all sigh. "You know," Leela tells me, offering the savories, "in those days we were easily getting a certain kind of silver paper. It is made of sugar in some way, silver sugar, but thin as paper and we use it to wrap our sweets. So very beautiful and you can eat it too. I like it too much. If I could just go to Bombay, then I would get some."

"I would get almonds!" the educator-writer tells me. She has a pink mark on her head to match her dress. Leela seems to have a red one. Sometimes Leela's is blue: sometimes she has none. I get the feeling somehow that it really isn't very professional to have one because no else in here does. Then I discover I've got something in my mouth that's so wonderful I think I'll swoon. There's no telling what it is. If they can't get anything these days, what was it like before? I feel like an Alice whose taste buds have just gone on the other side of the looking glass.

Someone across the room is asking me how much mangoes cost in America. She needs to know before she emigrates.

"But no one is getting green cards for States these days," Mrs. Patel (economist) says. "We have been trying for three years."

"Three years is nothing!" Dr. Singh tells her. They all laugh.

"I don't think you can get mangoes in America," I tell them.

"You can get," Leela says. She's done research. "They are growing in Florida and West Indies. But expensive, I tell you. You can pay fifteen shillings for one!"

"Even here they are too expensive," the educator-writer tells me. "Two years ago it was only some pennies

for one; now it can reach two shillings, two and a half."

They all shake their heads. The architect says, "You are all such silly geese."

I, meanwhile, have developed a sudden addiction to the things on the savory tray, like an unfortunate person who never knew she was an alcoholic until she took that first sip. So, after the tea is over, I hang around for more, on the pretense of helping Leela straighten up. We sit around for more tea and work on the tray.

"You know driving?" Leela asks; her cloudy eye drifts over, lands on me and drifts away. "I mean car driving."

"Yes," I tell her. In my mouth something is having a violent reaction to the ginger in the tea. I'm wondering if it's a kind of orgasm.

"Do you think it will take me long time to learn?" she asks.

"No," I tell her.

"Even if I am having problem with my eye?" she adds. "Not blind, mind you!"

"I don't know. They would test you before they let you drive."

She leans toward me holding her saree to her breast. It falls from her shoulder and touches my arm as though trying to get my attention away from the savory tray. "I wish to go to Canada, you see. There I will buy a very fine car, a white one of the type which is having the top go down. I will learn this driving and go in the car to my brother's house. I will find it on the map, you see. I will go there in surprise. That," she says leaning closer, "is why I wish to go to Canada. My brother is there."

"Your brother got a passport then?" I ask her.

"He got," she says. "Now he is himself Canadian citizen. And married to a Canadian." She lifts her chest, fixes her cloth. It sighs over her shoulder with a mixture of pride and anxiety.

"How long has your brother been there?" I ask her.

She doesn't answer. Instead she says, "I was having to stay behind with my mother. She was too old and my father already dead. His business was totally lost. My mother told Dilip, you must go. There is nothing left for you in this place. Dilip said, I will send for you soon. But she knew she would never see him again. After she was dead, he sent a letter to me. I am married to a Canadian, he told me. Is this so his mother would not know? Is it because he is ashamed of this marriage? It's better for Dilip, isn't it? Safer? But I know," she says, "he will not be sending for me."

"Even if he did send for you," I tell her, "you couldn't go because of this passport business."

"And also because of my father's money, you see. I have no way to take it from here." She leans back in her chair, her good eye on me, the other looking toward the window. Even though my mouth is still throbbing with pleasure, I feel sorry for her and sigh along in sympathy.

"But you can help me," she says. "In a small way. For me a help and for you also a help." I have no idea what's up. Surely she doesn't think I have an in at the American Embassy and can get her some papers?

No, it isn't that. Leela's talking about black market money. Instead of the official eight shillings on the dollar, she'll give me sixteen for cash and twenty for checks

deposited in her bank account in Toronto. She tells me there's a man, an American very high up in the Embassy who cashes a check with her every two weeks. This is to convince me that it's perfectly all right. "It's the only way for me to take my money out," she pleads. "When nothing is left, I will become a refugee. I will go to U.N. and tell them to give me a country. Can you have a person in the world who does not have a country? It is too serious," she says. "Can they tell me to go sit in the sky?"

"I can think of worse places," I tell her.

In Dar Es Salaam you can spend the whole day trying to buy a hairbrush. Someone stole mine. In a beauty parlor, a woman looks at me and says simply, as though she's talking about the weather, "You can't get one in all the country. They are finished. Why don't you just cut your hair?"

Leela's friend, Mrs. Singh (architect), finishing up an appointment, assures me it's true. "They finished two months ago," she says. The beautician repeats her advice: "Better to cut off your hair and use a comb."

On the way out, Mrs. Singh says she thinks she has an old hairbrush which she will loan me until I can write to a friend in America and have one sent. "Maybe you can buy one from someone who is leaving, at a yard sale."

"Maybe I will just cut it off," I tell her. "And use a comb."

She changes the subject, "Leela tells me you are a very good friend to her these days. It's so very kind of you. Of course, as a journalist, you must be very busy."

"Not so busy right now," I tell her.

"But tell me," she says, "what do you think are Leela's chances? Canada, the United States, isn't it all the same? Very difficult, isn't it?"

"But she has a brother there. That will help."

"Dilip?" she laughs. "He has married a Canadian girl. I trust his wife will not welcome Leela. It's not the same with you people, is it? What is a husband's sister to you? Something that you call in-law. Leela knows this, of course, but then, she has to have hope. She's quite alone, isn't she?"

"Why doesn't she stay here?" I ask the architect. "Her friends are here. She has a job."

"Oh dear dear!" she says laughing. "None of us can stay here much longer. It's quite impossible. But tell me, do you think Leela really can get a job there?" She puts her hand on my wrist. "Yes, it would be better for her to stay, but it's impossible. She will lose everything. We all will." Her tone is flat, like glass, shining and transparent. "Some of us will be able to start over. We who have professions. But can Leela start over? I, myself, know the problems because I have been to the States. Leela does not know what color we are there." She lifts the hand, perfume of rose water, bright nails flash. "No, she does not know about that. Have I offended you?"

Leela lives up to the popular myth that Asians have mattresses stuffed with money. "If we put it in a bank here, they will count it: then they will make a tax and take it away from us," she tells me. Today Leela is wearing a long terrycloth bathrobe. Her hair is undone, miles of it

beyond her hips, remembering its braid. The remains of a dot, like misplaced mascara, is on her forehead. She's coming apart. "Then if someone will be taking the money from the bank, they will say, What did you do with the money? What did you buy? Show us the receipt. No no no no, the bank is no place to put money." I've got a check for \$400 which I'm sending to her bank in Toronto and she's pulling out a wad of pink hundred shilling notes from the false back of a bureau drawer. Last time she fetched them from the closet. The time before it really was her mattress. Nothing original. I imagine her moving the little stashes around.

"How much more have you got to go, Leela?" It looks to me that at this rate, she'll be dishing out money from this hotel room for the next twenty years.

"Too much," she smiles. She's looking sad today. Her face powder is the wrong shade, her eyes smudged with kohl. Her fat is melting. She's complaining that there's no hot water. On the phone to the desk, her voice high pitched, pattering English laced with Hindi. She moves, gestures like a handpuppet's, stiff and graceless. A human being. There's no question anymore.

"What do you think," she asks, "if I go to Canada with no money?"

"But you have money, Leela. In that bank in Toronto. They won't take it from you. I promise!" I laugh at her.

"I have some. Only a little."

"How much?" In the paper I've been reading about sums in the millions. Asians with millions and millions of worthless shillings, smuggling them out at incredible rates, turning up in Geneva at forty to the dollar like wallpaper. "Tell me how much and I'll tell you how long you can live on it."

Nothing doing: she's already found out. "I can live one year, maybe two. But I need to get a job there. I can't go to Canada unless I can get this car. It's too expensive, isn't it?" she giggles—her white convertible, her fantasy, the key to some sister-in-law's heart.

Black plumbers come. They look like thugs. Bare-foot. Dressed in rags. They carry pipes and fittings. Wrenches. They slip into her room without speaking: they know her well. I feel the presence of her hidden loot as if all the hiding places were suddenly transparent, glowing pink with shillings from within. I wonder why these men haven't come in the night to kill her and raid the trove. In the bathroom, they run the water, muttering, banging on the pipes.

"But there IS hot water, Memsaab," the boss tells her.

She shrieks at them, "You are STUPID! ALL OF YOU! STUPID IDIOTS!" She rushes past them into the bath. I hear the water and her yell, "Just feel it! YOU STUPID IDIOTS!"

They say nothing. Two of them have remained in the room with me, look at each other and laugh silently. Shrugging, they walk away. In the bathroom I hear the head plumber tell her, "I will report it to the manager, Memsaab."

"You tell him to get it fixed, you idiot," she shouts, following him out, slamming the door after him. "There

is not hot water," she tells me. But she doesn't invite me in to test it.

Oh Leela, my Asian banker, sad friend and neighbor, you are never going to get out of here with your dough. There are no suitcases big enough for the hoard and if you turned it all to gold, you couldn't heft it. You've told me about your deals involving poached ivory, how they confiscated the tusks at the border. No one pinned anything on you, but you lost a lot. Fifty tusks were yours. And I know the price: \$500 a tusk. What will you do with your great buried treasure? It buys you nothing that you want. No citizenship, no passport, no way out. Not even silver sugar from Bombay.

Wednesday morning, Aftab, the desk clerk, one of the three or four queers in town, is running around in what appears to be more than his usual flap, waving the morning paper. "Look at this!" he tells me. The Government of Tanzania is issuing new hundred shilling notes. There's a picture of the old note crossed out and the new one with the President's sombre face glowering out at the Asians saying, "Ha ha ha I've got you now." The transfer is going to take place during a single work week starting next Monday. At the end of that week, the old pink notes will no longer be legal tender. Anybody on the way to Geneva with his trunks full of the stuff might as well have a bonfire. Anybody who's got his mattresses, false drawers and hollowed out books packed with it, might as well kiss the little secret good-bye.

I ask an African waiter the reason they are making the new notes. He tells me, "The old ones are wearing out. These are better ones." But an African business man at the next table leans over and explains, "There is too much of our money in Kenya. The Kenyans have stolen it to sell it to the tourists before they come here. In this way, they are getting dollars; we are getting our old money back."

I see Leela now in the hallway with Aftab. She reads the paper and adjusts her saree which appears to have suffered its own shock and come loose. She walks slowly to my table.

"I will give you ten thousand to change for me . . .," she starts in.

"Oh no you won't either, Leela. I'm not going into the bank with any ten thousand shillings. They'd ask me where I got it."

"You are American," she says. "I'm Asian. No, they won't ask you anything. I will give you twenty thousand."

"Leela, no! I can't do it."

"You can keep ten percent," she offers. She's talking into space working on a deal. Even her opaque eye is alive today. "Twenty percent," she says. "A commission. Twenty-five."

"You take the money in, Leela. If they tax you, so what? At least you'll get something."

"If I take my shillings in, they will see who I am. They will know I have no papers. They will tell me I have stolen. They will put me in jail . . ."

"No they will not," I tell her.

"More than a million shillings," she leans over the table. "More than two."

She's got more than two million shillings stuffed into that room? "O.K., I'll take in a thousand," I tell her. It sounds pathetically small. "But no more than two thousand. I still have seven hundred left from what you gave me before and no papers to show where that came from."

She doesn't answer, spreads some awful jam on her roll, bites it and grumbles, "Always stale."

Everyone knows that on Monday start of business, the chaos at the banks will close down everything else in town. Over the weekend, people from the towns where there are no banks started filtering into the capital pretending that their pockets weren't full of cash and that their suitcases had only underwear in them. Worried and slightly pissed off nomads who don't think much of this paper stuff anyway camped in the central market and caused a sanitation crisis—just another reminder that it's better to keep your assets in cattle instead of cash, just another proof that there's a bunch of fools running things in the towns. These guys are flashing little balled up wads of rancid money pulled out of leather pouches. It looks a thousand years old, prehistoric, as though it's been printed on papyrus. It isn't even pink anymore. A lot of the nomads want to exchange their smaller bills too, they don't trust any of it anymore. They don't understand anything about it.

But the Asians understand. Some of them have dared, brought suitcases full of money to the bank. They have the flat drugged look of people facing the dull prospect of harassment. Everyone with more than 50,000 shillings, they have been told, must register the exchange. It spells doom. They can only gamble on the salvage value, but the odds, as usual, favor the house. A tall man with a long beard, white pyjamas and a white turban is up there right now, a rumor spreads, changing over three million shillings. The women ahead of me in the line are telling the story and giggling. It's too long to wait. Never mind the heat: a very old black man behind me, who also has come with a big suitcase, leans on his son or grandson. He has that special dignity of the old in Africa, but below him, spreading around his sandals in a dark stain is the urine he could no longer hold. They close shop on Monday without coming near the end of the line.

It takes me three hours on Tuesday to get inside the bank with my seven hundred and three thousand of Leela's. She talked me into it. It's so hectic and sweaty in there that no one bothers to question the sum. Leela, meanwhile, has hit the bank as many times as she thinks she can without being noticed, taking in a couple of thousand every time. She's even taking some of it up north by charter plane to hit the banks up there. Plus she's got a few other people like me, on commission, but time is short and lines are long and by the end of the week, Leela hasn't even made a dent in her fortune.

I find her in her room, freshly showered, freshly decked in a purple saree, sitting quietly in a chair. Behind her on the floor, in tight bundles like bricks, a wall of hundred shilling notes. Old ones. I feel so terrible I offer to give up my commission and hand over the three thousand.

"No, it's yours," she insists. There's an emotion in the room with us, a tension—I'm not sure what it is—a

JAMES HAZARD

WHISKEY IN WHITING, INDIANA

Watching them drink shots was best. That fierce color as if it were burned into the glass—the shot glass itself so specialized, small and hefty the way a bullet is. Shots made them talk tough and say fighters' names. Mickey Walker, Willie Pep, Beau Jack, Stanley Ketchel, and Tony Zale. They talked cuts and knockdowns and recalled whole fights by the round. I got excited. I'd be Tony Zale, eye brows obliterated, and told them so. "Jesus Christ, no!" They'd cock their heads at the glass, the bartender would pour another shot. "Jesus, not you, Jimmie." They did that. Get a dream up, then tell you it was no good. Like how proud they talked about the mill, how tough and dirty they got and then made you promise to do homework so as not to be stuck like them. They said don't drink whiskey too. In the bathroom when nobody was home I'd be famous in front of the mirror with a shot glass of Pepsi, watching myself throw one back. This was after my title fight which I won after taking awful punishment just like Tony Zale from Gary. I'd use my mother's mascara and lipstick—to make black eyes and blooded places on my face, tuck cotton under to swell a lip. I'd study their Jimmie in the mirror: everything they loved and warned me not to be. Sock down another shot, wince the way they did, and watch myself defy them by loving what they loved, by fighting my way into their dreams of themselves and out of their dream for me.

mixture, maybe, of ruin and relief. "They will tell you," she says, "about our people here. How we have stolen. This and that they will say. Now you may see for yourself what has been stolen." She smiles like a mathematician who has just proved a new hypothesis.

I hold her shillings out to her but her hands remain fixed in her lap. She glances toward her bureau and I put them there. "My father was having seven trucks," she says; "he was carrying cargoes from the coast to the inside and from the inside to the coast. Little, little he put his

money away. In '68 they took away his trucks. They took his buildings. They took his cargoes. 'But they cannot take this money,' he said." It's all part of her theory now, the simple axioms and the ironic twist here at the end, shooting holes in the logic, declaring a new, terrible order. "Tell me, do you believe the dead can know what is going on?"

"Yes I do," I tell her. "But I don't think they care."

She smiles broadly. "Of course," she laughs, "how is it they can care?"

Very soon I get a chance to leave the hotel and move into a house. Just before I leave, Leela borrows Mrs. Patel's kitchen and does a vegetarian lunch with more than twelve dishes and plenty of my favorites—Leela's mango pickle, something that tastes like a cross between green olives, jalepeño peppers, unripe Georgia peaches and raw sauerkraut smothered in garlic. The luncheon is in honor of Dr. Singh, who has finally gotten green cards for all the family and will soon go to America. They have been waiting almost five years.

It's the professional ladies again and despite the recent upheaval with the currency, which I am sure has hit them all in one way or another, they all seem much the same. They sigh about the dirty trick but they don't complain—a characteristic of the persecuted. The architect says she had been expecting it. "Of course it was the only thing they could do," she says. "And in many ways, it was our own fault." She turns to me. "They believe our people don't trust their banks, that we want to hide things from them. And they are 100% correct. If our people wish to stay here, they will have to change their ways."

Everyone nods. But, of course, everyone wants to leave, so no one is planning to change. Leela has served up a little cocktail of tamarind juice before the lunch and is clinking the glasses to make a toast. "We are here to say good-bye to Dr. Singh who has been a kind and good friend to us all." We all look at Dr. Singh, raise our glasses and sip. The tamarind is as bitter sweet as the party. Mrs. Singh, the educator-writer, whose place seems permanently next to mine, whispers, "She has saved my daughter's life from typhoid."

"And I wish to tell you also," Leela goes on, "that I too will soon get papers!" The little gathering goes silent.

"What? Leela!" the architect says.

Leela says, "I have told the U.N. I am refugee. They do not know from which place I am refugee," she laughs, "but they say if Tanzania does not give me a visa, I will have no place to go—same as a refugee. They wrote all this down."

"Will they send you back to India?" Mrs. Patel asks.

"How?" she asks, "when I am not Indian."

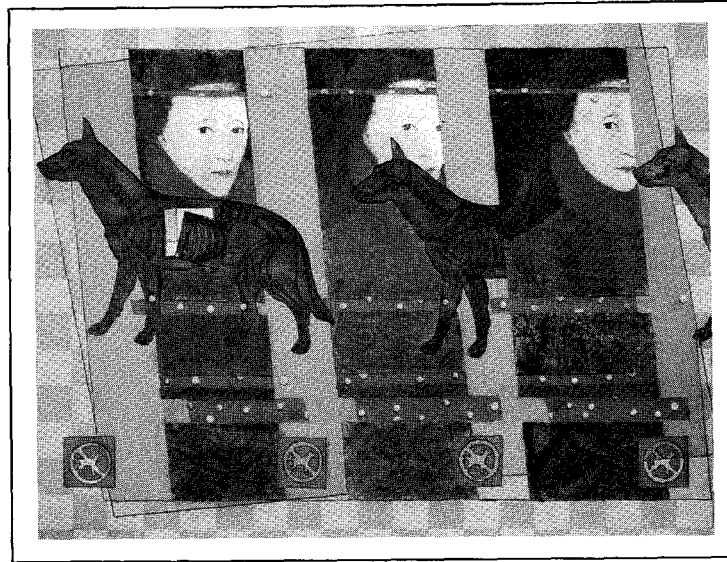
"But the Tanzanians will give you a visa to stay," someone suggests.

"They have refused!" Leela says like a person who's been tied up and has just got the last knot undone.

I tell her, "Perhaps they will make you sit in the sky." The women look puzzled. Leela nods, fixes her saree: her clouded drifting eye relaxes and smiles with the other one. "It's not such a bad place up there," I tell everyone. "You can get EVERYTHING, even silver sugar, and you just have to wait for a good spot to jump off." □

THE DOGS

SANDRA WITT



When I first came to this country, I had not noticed the dogs. They were pushed to the edge of my attention by the heat that made the mud walls shimmer above the dust. Barren paths, one on top of the other, crossed the city where people merged and crowded, flowing constantly over the ground. Even after they had gone, the rough dust wedged into the shapes of feet would remind me that the people had been there in astounding numbers, selling their bread and bundles of clothing. Their sheer numbers overwhelmed me. When I would watch them hanging out the bus doors, so many clinging to the doorframe that the bus crippled along leaning toward the door, when I saw them haggling over rice and elbowing their way in and out of the shacks, I felt a discomfort I could not name.

And the city had no trees or grass. There were no insects except mosquitoes, flies and fleas; no butterflies, dragonflies or caterpillars. But even more disturbing was the absence of wild animals. Lying in bed in the mornings, I knew that when I finally looked out the window, I would see no squirrels, no rabbits, no birds. I missed the birds intensely and I would wait for their lonely and delicate calls. In the yellow of the semi-dark, I would wait until the sun colored the drapes a deep orange, the heat began to rise and I could feel the dampness of my own body in the sheets. Then the people would begin calling up and down the alleys to each other. The donkeys would strain under the weight of wooden carts, and the sounds would grow as the crowds merged in the streets, wandering as if hypnotized.

The first time I saw the dogs, I was making my way through mounds of garbage in an alley that ran behind the main road. The sweet odor of rotting fruit was oppressive. Heat bounced off the compound walls on either side of the narrow path, making my head throb. I moved slowly and flies rose up in a grey swirl wherever I placed my feet. Suddenly I glimpsed a mother dog suckling five small puppies in an open sewer dried from summer's heat. As I

neared, she turned and growled deep in her throat. The hair on her back arched in a wave of rough grey needles. The pomegranate husks lying beside her glistened and danced in my eyes. I could not get my breath, but I backed away and quickly slipped through a mud archway. Walking back toward the main road through the dusty corridor, knowing that I would need to fight through the swarming bodies in the Spice Bazaar, I thought of the mouths sucking her belly, the tiny pink claws kneading.

After that I looked for the dogs and saw that many were being dragged along on ropes by children attempting to sell them to foreigners. Usually they were ragged, half grown puppies. Occasionally they would break away from the children only to be jerked back by the rope until they whined pitifully. Others were tied between the footpaths and the roads so that by avoiding the kicks of passers-by, they were forced in front of the buses. Sometimes a dog painted green or red would bound past my home to a nearby alley and disappear. And once I found myself carried along in a crush of bodies toward two maimed dogs who were snapping and lunging at each other, goaded on by a betting crowd.

One afternoon I had a headache and went to bed before sunset, but I awoke at twilight. The air was silver with the dust from a passing dust storm. In the quiet house I could not sleep for the thought of the dogs, jerked on strings like puppets, and the people bristling through the streets like a thick pelt. I paced back and forth in front of the huge window but soon found that too confining and slipped into the street. The people had disappeared completely. The long rows of mud walls were tunnels burrowed through the dark. As I walked the quiet seeped into my body like a drug, relaxing muscles that had been taut for months. It was good to be alone for once. Even in my home the people's calling came through my walls like hands reaching out to be filled.

As the last glimmer sank and the crusted mud walls glowed silver, the coolness of a night breeze, unlike anything I had felt before, rustled through my hair. The moon rose like a huge globe. I wondered at the stars that were clear and silent, at the whiteness of the dust, at the ease and pleasure of walking.

I turned a corner and went along another street, a place I could not recall having been through. The compound wall was lower than most and I passed a small window covered with steel bars. All along the walls the mud bricks cast thin black shadows. Suddenly I recognized the alley where the dogs often disappeared. Two wooden doors, attached only by the top hinges, hung at an unmistakable angle. At that moment I heard a low growl. I looked back along the way I had come, but no one was behind me. I peered into the street ahead where the path wound on until it disappeared in the dark. Slowly, I reached out toward the wall and had barely touched it when a pack of ten or twelve dogs burst from the alley entrance. I climbed onto a small but high window ledge I had seen above my head as more and more dogs emerged until they crowded the streets. They were all colors, sizes, shapes. Some padded along the paths. Others rooted through the garbage, snapping up bits of fruit or bones. Many were lame or malnourished, their ribs held together by thin fur, but that did not stop them. They moved out in a ragged but determined procession, leaping in and out of the open sewers to chase a rat or a smaller dog for food. All night long the dogs filled the streets in numbers I would never have believed possible, the bitches crowding their pups beneath their bellies as they walked.

I was so tired I could not see clearly, but I watched the dogs overtake the city. They blurred, ran together in a continuous stream hour after hour. I must have dozed. When I opened my eyes they were leaving. The sun was barely adding light to the tops of the mountains looming overhead, but the snow had an unreal brilliance. The dogs straggled toward cover until only the very ill or painted dogs remained skirting through the garbage attempting to find some tidbit that would keep them alive another day.

When the sun was high enough to give the walls their customary bleached appearance and the building behind me felt warm against my back, people began to shout to one another. I heard the single flute playing a song that reminded me of birds in flight. Hurrying down from my perch, I was grateful that I had found enough room to curl my legs beneath me and lie down, but now there was no time. I ran all the way home to avoid being caught in the people's onrush.

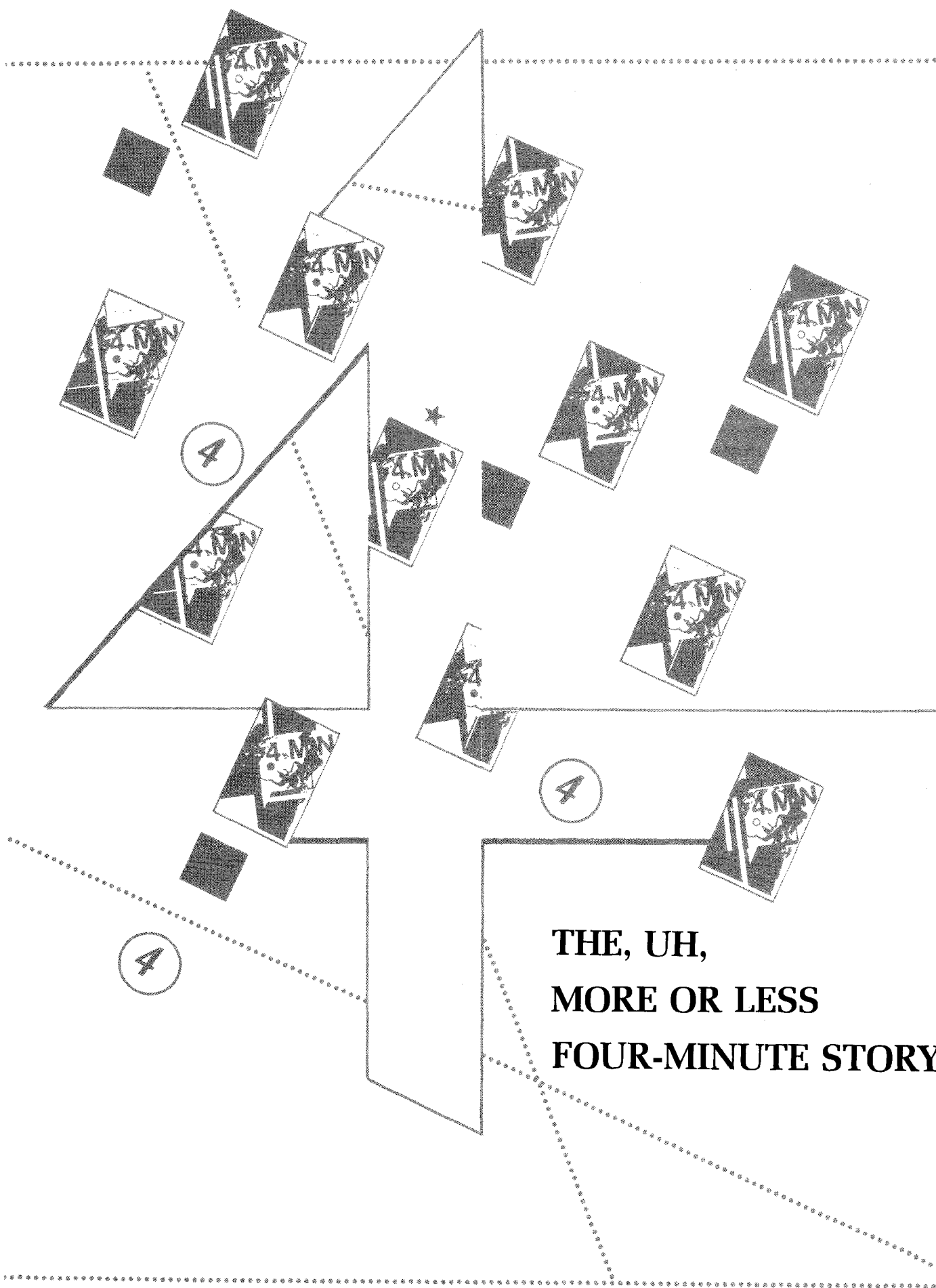
After that night I focused all of my attention on the way they treated the dogs. When a large dog unexpectedly bounded by, the women would cringe into their veils and, gathering their children protectively in their arms, would wail until the dog was out of sight. Once I saw a large white dog leap out of a compound door, and two grown men fell back toward the sewer, terrified. Reaching for his turban, fallen to the side of his face, one man gathered up his robes and, with lips drawn back, ran through the streets shrieking. The other fainted. But the

people's attitudes changed completely when they spotted a small or captured dog. These they treated with unbelievable cruelty. If the animal were tied, the children would poke sticks in its eyes. The people knotted ropes around the puppies' necks and did not loosen them as the dogs grew. I scrutinized the faces, the brown glittering eyes, and felt both awe and nausea.

I grew weary of the city. I could not think because the people crowded into my thoughts as they did into the buses and would not allow me any peace. The eternal dust that worked slowly through the windows and the heavy yellow skies seemed to press my skin against my bones. I hated the scrawny brown hands. I avoided going into the streets and holed up in my upstairs bedroom. I played the stereo as loud as I could: Beethoven and Bach to drown out the people's calling and crying. I closed the drapes and did not look over the compound wall even once for several weeks. When my servant came with food and I heard him padding up the stairs, I slid into the bathroom and waited until his slippers flapped on the stone steps as he descended. I slept long hours but rather than dreaming of the huge oaks beside my father's house and the pheasants and rabbits hidden in the woods, I dreamed of the people. They slowly entered my room, crowding near the bed until the space was so full, the walls began to crack and sway.

I bolted awake one afternoon, my ears throbbing to the voice of a dog. As I lay in my bed the constant noise shrilled through every pitch of torture. In all the years I had lived near the animals in the forest, I had never heard a sound like it, not in the rattling throats of birds caught by cats or the high wails of rabbits carried away in the talons of hawks, not in the whimpers of the dogs kicked aside as the people filled the streets or the growls lodged in their throats as they were herded and shot in the sewers. It seemed to resemble the tones of a living animal only in the brief gasps when air failed the lungs, but it went on and on until I could not stand it. My head pounded with the sound as if it had entered my throat, as if my voice were high and soaring beyond the snow in the mountains where nothing was possible except pain and the emptiness of sky. I went to the window. There, in front of the alley where the dogs disappeared, a crowd had gathered. Men were shouting and hitting each other on the back while others laughed and a few stood looking on quietly, a certain contentment in their faces; all the while the screeching continued, making my hair rise up on my scalp. Suddenly the cry stopped.

A man at the front of the crowd curled his hand and pocketed a small box of matches. For one long moment in the hot afternoon the crowd continued watching, motionless. The dust their feet had stirred hung near the hems of their gowns. They began shuffling, talking and soon wandered away from their short entertainment, but I stayed on, held before the window by the silence that crept over me. I watched the bare packed earth streets without trees or birds, the endless rows of mud hovels. I saw the colorless empty sky and the doors ajar before the entrance. I listened to the silence the dog had become. I listened to that silent dog and I hear it as I tell you. □



**THE, UH,
MORE OR LESS
FOUR-MINUTE STORY**

GRAND CANYON STATE

Valerie P. Cohen



When Toby Howland asked me on a trip I went because he was so sweet, though I thought he wanted me less than he wanted my credit card. That winter he worked in his mother's insurance office but wasn't much help to her—too vague. Later on somebody said he took up carpentry, which would be more his style. A bit short on personality, that boy . . . he must have been or I'd remember him better.

As it is I can't recall what we talked about—maybe we didn't talk?—mostly I remember his being there, his voice. He had a soft voice, high as a woman's, a habit of not finishing his sentences. It drove me crazy. He'd say "I was thinking . . ." or "I figured out . . ." but by the time I asked him what he'd been going to say he'd forgotten all about it. He used to sing me songs, love songs, the only man I ever knew who could do that and not look silly, only man who sang me songs period, come to think of it. His singing voice was soft too but very clear. He couldn't remember but the first few lines and part of a refrain so he'd hum the rest or make it up.

I do remember how he looked—how could I forget?—all that hair the color of old line Kentucky bourbon, I could fill both fists with it and never hold it all. Skin nearly the same color. Eyes, green they were, pointed at the ends, green with amber spots, bottom of a brook; I'd stare into them looking for trout. Maybe he didn't have to think. Not like other people. Lord knows what he saw in me, reality maybe. He knew I'd put oil in the car and remember to pay the waitress. He made me feel large and ill-tempered. I couldn't stand the way he trailed off like a child.

We never should have left the city but how was I to know? We drove east to the Grand Canyon, Christmas time it was, I was between jobs and he didn't seem to know whether he should be working or not. Off we went inland in his old black Mustang. Its engine knocked and it had no spare but I loved the way that car smelled like a field of wild grass under rain. I don't know where we got the idea to go there, to the Grand Canyon—we felt like traveling and he said this was supposed to be one of the main curiosities of the world. He even got a map.

In a way it was a curiosity. Big, I'll say that. Of course I'd seen pictures but they didn't give any idea. I'd flown over it a time or two—from thirty thousand feet it looked like a gully in a bean field. This time we slid up on it

across desert plains, sagebrush, grass, then at the end thick, self-contained juniper and pinyon. I could see indigo forest extending far northward to a long straight horizon, yet all of a sudden, wham! was a big hole right between my feet, I was shocked at how immense. And intricate: uncounted cliffs, ledges, ridges, buttes the color of dried blood.

The only way you could tell how big was when you saw something familiar, trail or building or the Colorado River itself. The place made a noise, a sort of hum like a train so far off you're not sure you hear it at all; when I was little I used to listen to sounds going away till long after they were gone.

Toby was terrified. He said the only way he could stand to look was by keeping one eye on that hotel on the other rim. Said it showed people had the upper hand. I knew what he meant, but still, I thought about walking down in to touch the earth's oldest living rocks. They had big signs all over warning you in three different languages like in an airport: Don't go. Too far. Blisters. Snakes. Heatstroke. I really thought it might be a hundred degrees down at the river even though we stood on snow while junipers wailed in winter wind. No, we just drove down the road, stopping at turn-outs like everybody else till Toby said he was bored and couldn't we drive down to Flagstaff for something to eat. We had to go home next day anyhow for my job, should've gone straight back. Yet I always liked that clear name: Flagstaff.

Driving down, we were happy to be back on solid ground and he sang along with whatever came on the radio. He could follow any tune. It should have been a fine time but I felt sad because I knew there was no real reason to be on this trip together. He'd forget all about it in a month, tell people "Hey, me and this chick went to . . ." What an idiot. I was an idiot, driving all over Arizona when I knew it wouldn't matter when it was over. I think that was the first time I realized nobody was going to stick around me forever and I'd just as soon be alone and not have to bother. It made me feel old. I never expected to turn out this way when I was a kid: never even occurred to me.

Smelling the warm-grass smell of his body from clear across the seat, I watched him. Tried to make myself feel *more*—sorrow, joy, anything—the planes of his face were so delicately balanced it seemed impossible they should

not dissolve but could stay that way, day after day. Was there something wrong with me? Twice I had to remind him to get gas. And then too, I felt let-down that the canyon hadn't been more exciting; it did nothing but breathe.

We got into Flagstaff after dark. Lights winked between trees, the whole town scattered through tall pine forest like somebody dropped the pieces out of an airplane. Midair collision. Or maybe it fell off a freight, that's what it is, railroad town. Southern Pacific, Santa Fe? All outskirts. We were somewhere near tracks on a highway that went home one way or the other to Albuquerque, Amarillo, Atlanta. There were bars on the left side of the street among Chinese restaurants, snow piled on the sidewalk in black banks; ice was on the road, pickup trucks.

Suddenly one pulled out in front of us. We slammed right into it. Toby didn't have his seatbelt on of course and broke the windshield with his head. People poured out of bars to mill about smelling like sheep-shit and beer, talking: English, Chinese, Spanish, something else, Navajo, I think. The driver of the truck jumped out screaming: he was Indian, we couldn't understand a word. Two men pushed me. Toby didn't know what had happened. Black in the darkness, blood froze on his face in jagged lines. I was afraid somebody would hit him before the police came. I was so mad I nearly left.

Only I couldn't. What they called it was detainment. The cars were bashed in and stuck together like two dogs. Toby asked total strangers in this dreamy voice did they know a good restaurant or were we at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. The other driver kept falling down in gasoline and broken glass, cursing while insanely the crowd cheered. The cops couldn't figure out what happened either. I lost my I.D.

Who did I think I was, anyway? One cop said, "Sister, *you* were in that pickup and we don't give a shit what happens when your old man finds out!" Toby said he thought I was *his* sister but his parents got divorced. They sent him off to the hospital and transported the truck driver and me in handcuffs to their station.

I was glad to be in a warm room away from all those people. They towed in the Mustang; now it smelled like an old oil well instead of wet grass. They did find out I was who I said I was and took my statement. Fifteen dollars for bald tires was our ticket; it turned out the other man was drunk. We were supposed to get called back as witnesses but nothing ever came of it.

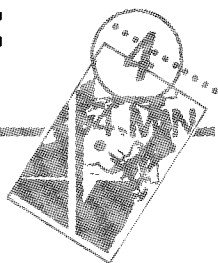
Toby showed up at dawn looking like a space-man with a head full of stitches and half his hair shaved off. He smiled but didn't ask me how my night had been. We sold the Mustang to a junk dealer and used the money for bus tickets home.

We sat in back singing songs till a lady asked me was he dangerous and I told him to shut up and try to act normal. Then an old man wanted to know were we married; Toby said we were engaged and I let it go at that. I realized I didn't know a single person in all of Arizona, felt so lonely I had to turn my face to the window so he wouldn't see, looking north to endless cobalt tableland holding inside it, unseen, unknown, a sighing river-canyon.

I didn't see him after that trip. Now and then I think I'll see him again to glimpse trout swimming in his eyes; it's hard to imagine all that hair gone grey but I suppose it must be by now. I don't want to think about it. I don't suppose he'd remember me but he might remember the wreck in Flagstaff. I wonder who he sings songs to now. □

THE BIRDS WERE MOLTING

Kathleen Pheifer



The doctor wanted proof.

"They've put up missile sites at Stonehenge."

"Hardly conclusive proof that the world is rotten."

"Just one of the symptoms."

The doctor said relax. Your blood pressure. You're taking things too seriously.

I took a lover once. He turned out to be my husband. I got round. A child came. The child lay, eyes studying me as I changed him, then sprayed me with urine. What good can come of something like this? I asked. My husband patted my head. I fed my husband, the child, the dog,

cat, parakeet, goose. The dog ate the goose, the cat the parakeet. The child ate me and spit me out. The dog, the cat, the child all left home and did not return. My husband stayed and died.

Relax, the doctor said. A naturally stressful time. You had a good life together. Look at the bright side.

"The sun is dying."

I walked down the street from the clinic. The neon light for Kelvin's Diner told me to relax. I retreated into Woolworth's.

It's not, I told the cashier who complimented my

black dress, a simple matter of a void, as the doctor thinks. I could almost say I'm glad he's dead.

She looked shocked.

"Of course, not really. He was a good man."

"Perhaps you'd like to relax in the Luncheonette? There's people waiting behind you."

"They have such faith, those doctors. Cause and effect. No such thing. Living proof. That's me. It has nothing to do with Jerry dying. I simply realized. Suddenly I knew."

You must know, I told the police officer who guided me away from the cashier. Murder, rape, perversion. All symptoms of an essential rotting.

"You forgot kooks."

"It's a rotten world."

"Yeah. Rotten."

"See? He knows!" I shouted at the cashier as we left. The policeman drove me home.

"Doc says you lost your old man. Says for you to take your pills, go to bed, relax."

"A mere coincidence of events, officer, the children playing in the cemetery as we buried him. Sacrilegious. Unafraid. Their nervous energy. A man stood among them drinking from a paper bag. He looked as if he might be our son. It was hard to tell. His skin, you see, was molting. But then I noticed so was everyone and everything. And it's stayed that way. So you see, I know."

"I better go."

"You don't see, do you?"

"Can't say that I do."

"Take my word."

"Sure."

"You have a piece of skin curling up your nose."

"And you?"

"Positively grotesque."

"Molting?"

"Molting."

"Underneath?"

"Not sure. Bad smell. Something rotten."

"All of us?"

"All."

"Not very cheery."

"You get used to it."

"You're obsessed with death. It's only natural. You should relax."

"Children don't relax. They know. Show me a child that doesn't like playing in its own feces. And who can be crueller than a child? But they're just children, we say."

"Look, lady, I haven't got all day. Either take the pill and lay down or we go to St. Vincent's. Doc's orders."

"I'm not crazy."

"Your choice."

"Okay. Okay."

I took the pill and lay down, watched as he left. A piece of skin dangled from his wrist as he closed the door. You'll see, I whispered.

I got up and shook myself. I had to remain alert to keep seeing. I hadn't slept since the funeral three days ago. I went into the kitchen. Pans filled with leftover dinners from neighbors filled the sink. I remembered a woman in black, me, at the door, thank you very much, you're very kind, yes, it has been hard, he was a wonderful man, a good husband, yes.

A civic leader.

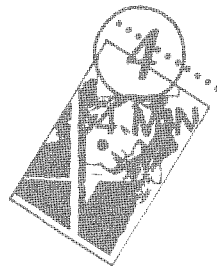
A good provider.

I saw my molting reflection in the kitchen window. That first night after returning from the hospital I took all his things into the basement, danced around the house in a pink suit until Mrs. Rogers came by, her arms full of black cloth. So sorry to hear. These might fit. Please feel free.

I studied my reflection again. Ugly. So ugly. Yes, dammit, glad, glad he was dead. I had wanted to play with the children in the cemetery. Inexplicable. I touched my reflection. Yes, it was me. I looked myself in the eyes, the first time since the funeral.

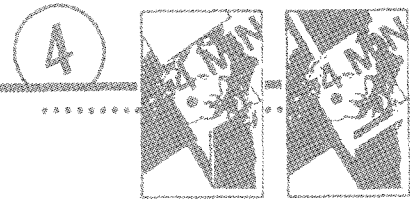
I felt dizzy, my heart pounded from the pill. I went into the livingroom and sat down.

I woke to the sight of my hand, skin wrinkled, but whole. I touched my face. The same. I breathed in deeply. Again. Smiled. Yes. The smell. Distant, but still there. □



THE PLOWMAN

Virginia Pye



The woman lies in bed hearing the dogs bark in a distance. The world is muted now in falling snow. Inches accumulate, heavier than the quilt. Occasionally, a car sounds far off, wheels spinning. Tonight is an impassable night. The woman and her husband live on a hill where no one comes. She is not asleep. For what seems like hours she has listened to the small sounds of the house coming to her through the floorboards.

Once, she hears her husband downstairs. The log dropped onto the fire, the shifting of the embers, the scraping of iron tongs: it warms her to know he is there and awake. Some evenings he falls asleep before the low fire and she must rise to help him to bed. Soon, she thinks, she will hear footsteps on the stairs.

The sound of a snowplow on the road startles her from near-sleep: the scraping, the rhythm of chained wheels, a hissing on the road. She knows without moving that her husband is not beside her in the bed. How long has she dozed? She knows that shortly he will slowly move up the stairs, his tired legs straining in an effort to remain silent. He will come into the bedroom, she thinks, and undress there by the window. He will hold his coin-filled pocket when he steps from his trousers. Standing by the bathroom basin in the diffuse moonlight, he will see a silver reflection.

Only, it is now that he steps from the bathroom. I must have been sleeping, she thinks. Her husband cautiously pulls back the covers and slips into bed. The plow outside struggles on the hill, its flashing light freezing each thing in a sudden glare. She hears the hissing sound. For my sake, she thinks, he does not flinch.

The husband thinks his wife has been asleep for hours. He lies listening now. In the past he has awakened her with his movements and simply by her sudden shift he has known her displeasure. He is still now, hearing her heavy breathing. He will wait to be sure she is sleeping before comfortably settling himself in bed.

She breathes heavily, sensing his cautious stillness. Everything about him, she thinks, is careful that way: she wants to roll over and touch him, comforting. Just roll over to ease his mind. She hears the plow, rocking back and forth in its own effort. It must be moving to the steep bend in the road, she thinks,

She knows she must not disrupt his labored stillness: he must think she is asleep. Just the same, she deliberately moves her leg towards him as if in a dream-ridden moment, natural and unsuspecting. Her leg touches his thigh. She would like to place her arm across his chest. She is still.

The plow is suddenly silent, the engine dead. A plowman's hand shoveling can be heard on the gravel road. She imagines the plowman alone, hearing the labored scraping sound. Her husband has not moved, she thinks. He is taut and my touch has only made things worse. He must be thinking of the sound outside, or the paper he has read by the fire, the words of his lecture pausing again in his mind. Or perhaps he is occupied with something, anything. My breathing, she thinks: he is wondering if he has disturbed my sleep. He must be hearing the plow, concerned with tomorrow. There are so many things that occupy him. She would touch him now. His thoughts are a thousand miles away, she thinks, and because of me he is unresting.

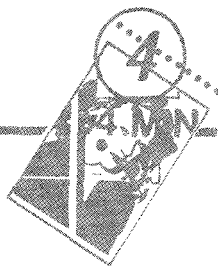
The man lies with his head partially propped too high on the pillow. He hears the plow and his wife's patient breathing, then he hears the slow syllables of his own voice. He is standing, his hands held behind his back and his voice sounding clear, persuasive: before him, the faces of his students, then the touch of a colleague's hand on his arm, a handshake. Before he sleeps he considers how he will recount his day to his wife, telling her every detail to keep it all clear in his own mind. He would touch her now, only she is asleep, and another handshake, then another and sleep.

He breathes imperceptibly. Her leg is stiff with the touch of his thigh. His body seems rigid beside her. Her lower back aches. There is an itching now below her knee. She thinks he must be listening to the distant barking. Perhaps hearing the plowman. His thoughts as sad and muffled as that sound. She would revive him with her touch. She would split the night open with her touch, only to discover he is thinking of nothing really, just watching the shadow of the window, hearing the familiar sounds. She would have them lie together, hearing the same sounds. She would have them listen together, like-minded and still. But she knows he thinks of another day, someone he met in passing: there is never any telling. As if without a care, she straightens her leg and turns away.

The plow starts up again. The dogs continue in the sound of spinning wheels. She opens her eyes to see the room streaked yellow with occasional flashing light. The room is shadow, then light, again shadow and she would break the sound and the light with her touch. The hissing of the plow, the steady sound of chained wheels on the road, the plow moving on and silence regained. She rolls again to him and pauses, her hand still by his side. Only then, the woman sleeps. □

THE THUG

Michael Stephens



At twenty-nine he is finished. There are welts and knobs about his face, and his mind cannot focus. His short-term memory is like a tabula rasa; he does not remember the route he walks home or who he spoke with that afternoon. These childhood images creep into his mind late at night. He did not have a wonderful childhood, but now his memory of it is wonderful—like an idyll. His liver aches; blood flows from the kidney when he urinates. He never had a handsome nose, but now it is broken in so many places, it isn't even a nose. He breathes in a wheezy fashion through his mouth. That makes him thirsty, and so he opens a quart of beer. He places a beat up chair at the window, raises the curtain, sits and stares for hours at the children and old people, the only inhabitants of the street at this time of day. His gloves are hung on the wall; the other gear is in a closet. When he visited the gym recently, no one remembered him. That didn't trouble him, for his short-term memory wiped that out. When he blinks he feels the scar tissue in his eyebrows and below his eyes. There were good cut-men in his corner; he was not a bleeder. But you don't come away from this without scars. That is part of the game. You take a punch as much as you give one. In his last fight he came out of his corner too tight; he felt the muscles of his back rippling, even before the first punch was thrown. He bobbed and weaved when he didn't have to; he was wearing himself out. It was his left hook which landed first, seeming to startle his opponent, but he realizes now that it was an excellent ploy, that it made him confident too early on in the bout. By the second round he felt himself sapping out, his energy focused on staying in that round instead of coming out to fight. He kept moving right, moving right, then cutting back into the grain, bobbing, snapping a left. There were fighters who lost eleven or twelve rounds, and in the thirteenth came out for the K.O. There were those who only punched one part of the opponent's body all night, letting themselves take a beating, until the opponent's corner threw in the towel late in the fight, the boxer unable to raise his right arm. If it got bad, he was not averse to a butt; that was part of it, too. It was not all science, really, that was a lot of bunk. Without the instinct there was no strategy. From the back of his head he heard a small voice pleading to be released, to find itself elsewhere than in this ring. He opened a small cut under the other fellow's right eye, but he couldn't get past the defense to open it further, and by the end of the second round, he found himself gasping for breath. His manager kept saying, Ease up, easy does it, let yourself hang loose. You'll burn out in the fourth, if you don't. He watched the other boxer come out slowly for the third round, and he thought maybe he split the first and won the second, but

as they were about to engage in punches, he heard his trainer call out, We're down two! As he turned to dispute this remark a right cross blasted his face and he stumbled backward, hitting the ropes and bouncing right into a barrage of punches, which stuck him in the corner. His opponent unleashed a series of upper and lower punches, working an effective combination on him, and he felt the lights snapping out, his legs feeling like rubber, and those taut muscles on his back going epileptic. I'm not going out this way, he told himself, and managed to get the fight moved to the center ring after the referee stepped in for a break. The ref told the other fighter to keep his punches up. He leaned on the other fighter, trying to work small, tight punches into his stomach, some of which were working well. He swung wildly with a right, leaving himself open for another onslaught of combinations, which sent him back to the ropes and the corner, but he worked himself out of that effectively. As the bell sounded he threw one last punch which hit his opponent squarely in the nose and the cornermen for his opponent worked on the blood flowing. The referee stepped to his corner and said he lost a point for that punch and next time he better break at the bell. It was an accident, the trainer said. Yeah, the manager said under his breath, anything he lands tonight is an accident. With round four the tensions were gone, but he kept feeling these epileptic waves working over his lower back and his chest, as though one good punch might make him spastic on the canvas. He crouched, ducking, working to his right, sidestepping brutal punches; he counterpunched his way through this round nicely, and when the bell sounded his corner said, At least we got one round so far. I'm up three to one, he said. You are, the cut-man said, my name is Joe Louis. What a bum! he heard someone from the audience call out, and then the bell rang again. His feet were leaden, which forced him to fight squarely in the center of the ring, which was a tactic he did not mind. His upper torso was fluid now, feeling the right amount of pain and tension, the proper equation of energy contained and energy released. He landed a solid jab, another, and still a third jab, but when he went in for a *coup de grace*, the other guy plastered him with combinations, little stinging punches which were accumulating now. For half a minute he worked a fine defense, but one good punch toppled him backward—I slid on the canvas! he screamed—but it was counted as a knockdown and he had to take the mandatory count. He walked into another punch which sent him back to the ropes, but he slipped his opponent, actually reversed their positions, and just when he thought he had him in a good spot, a place to work on his face and stomach, he felt another stinging punch to his head, followed by a bombardment which left him walking around in circles, and when the bell rang—if the bell really rang then—he didn't know which corner was his, the faces of the cornermen did not look any different, and when he finally sat down, he heard them say, Let's throw in the towel. No, no, another said, I can't see him fighting ever again. He's beat to pieces with this fight. Let him knock his brains out. There isn't much left to him anyhow. And when he came out for the sixth round he found his arms tight and immovable, his legwork gone, and his

head ached terribly. He took twenty or thirty small quick punches everywhere, and then his mouthpiece was flying across the ring, his legs caught the epilepsy from his lower back, his head bounced on the canvas, and then he heard a soft lullaby, one, two, three, four, the referee counted, his whole body spastic on the mat, and then the ring filled with people, and this doctor asked him, How much is two plus two? What is the capital of the United States? Who discovered America? Tell me your first name. But as he sat in his room now, staring out at the children and old people, he did not recall what his name was or what his profession had been, only that he was a man without a

profession presently, that he was a man in this room, yes, that was certain, there was enough pain running through him to prove it, but beyond this there was the street, and beyond that he was a man, and when he urinated blood flowed out, and when he lay down a pounding headache accompanied that, and when he walked down the stairs or around the corner for a beer, there was this feeling of epilepsy about to rupture his body, but he must get up and go around the corner, because there is the promise of a job washing dishes in the bar, and unless he gets some money this week, he will be evicted from his room. . . . □

LEAVE THEM LAUGHING

Roberta Metz Swann



Murphy squeezed his bulk into place. The bartender nodded, standing sentinel over a vista of bottles. Murph was a boozier who murdered the night drinking two cases. He ordered bottles because he didn't trust draft, certain the lines were dirty. Propping crutches against the wall behind him, he called after each passerby, "Let me move these for you," his way of never moving at all.

A tape piped "Three Coins in the Fountain." TV jocks jumped up after each hit and run. Murphy drank fast, joked he hated warm beer. A skinny blonde, dressed lightly in heavy makeup, tripped in and camped beside him. Lucy unslung her bag, letting it fall in a heap on the bar. Murph set her up and Lucy ordered a Tweetie—a screwdriver with a banana. After three of those, she planted a kiss on his damp cheek.

"Hear about Mickey Mouse wanting to divorce Minnie on grounds of insanity?"

Murphy shook his head, already functioning as a laugh track. Lucy bit into her banana, continuing.

"So the judge asks if Minnie is REALLY crazy? And Mickey says NO, she's just fucking Goofy."

Murphy slapped his knee. He liked to whoop it up. Laugh and the world laughs with you, he always said.

A tear rode down his nose. He closed his eyes and felt a queer pain where his foot should have been. He told Lucy again how 2500 pounds of glass severed his foot. Feigning sympathy, she was not altogether unmoved. Fooling with her snap-a-bead necklace, it popped in two.

"Thataboy," she gouged his shoulder.

Murphy's smile split his face in two.

"Still got my looks," he strained.

Slightly woozy, Lucy started singing: Nobody-knows-the-trouble-I've-seen . . . Murphy ran thick fingers

through his dead-brown hair. Lucy pressed her mouth against his ear.

"Me and you later babe—you'll feel good as new."

Murphy negotiated his crutches and headed towards the toilet.

Lucy noticed a newcomer nursing a whiskey. Sliding next to him she told him her Mickey Mouse joke. He stared back blank as a cabbage. She started to milk his leg.

"Sex is good when you need it and when you don't. My grandmother was married five times and the last time, she didn't even have to."

Lucy laughed at her own joke, watching Murphy lumber back to his perch. He toasted her from across the room. Lucy made her move and the newcomer followed her into the parking lot.

"Where to?" he asked her.

"Gotta car?"

He pointed to the Rambler with the crumpled fender.

"Why move? Ain'tcha got everything you need?"

Murphy drank his last and paid the tab. The thought of doing some time in Lucy's bed crossed his mind but he was too poor to pay attention.

"Too poor to pay attention . . . hey that's funny," he said to no one in particular.

Outside, neon flickered. Walking, he leaned heavily on his crutches. Murphy was feeling no pain, he'd tell whoever didn't ask. Digging into his pocket, he pulled out a dime and stopped at the pay phone. Laugh and the world laughs with you, he said out loud as he dialed a joke.

"I hurt my foot doc. What should I do?" a recorded voice asked.

"Limp," a recorded voice answered. □

A TEACHER'S OPTIONS

Tom Whalen



Mostly it depended on whether you thought the market metastatic and fluid or something that would stop long enough for your order to go in and be purchased by your man or woman on the floor . . . was the way he had figured options at first; but later, sleeping in bed, he would awake with a start in the middle of the night, wondering what really was the cause of market fluctuation. This morning his students had many questions. Did he pray? one of them asked. Every day, he said. In the hall another asked why he was looking so unusually cheerful. Market's up, he said. But is it really? He has no time to keep track of the options he's purchased. Today he bought a new pair of slippers, but he already had a pair. Bought at Shoetown. Does he own stock in that? He sits for two hours after school with another crying student worried about her future and grades.

Will Stoker call, his friend in San Francisco? Will he call and tell him why GE is down, what it is that has caused this descent in the smallest of his options? Options are risky. Semiconductors are a fad stock. After work he collapses from the daily round, unable even to phone his discount broker for a report. Like most of them, the crying student was having a difficult time establishing a moral stance towards sex and drugs, but it has been years since he has done any dope heavily, and sexually he figures something will always turn up. All he wanted to do was foretell the future of his options, and he hung about the back room late into the night waiting for the call from his friend. It's a risk. I know. That's what I like about it. But still. . . . He could not even imagine the conversation. Sitting at his desk, waiting for the call (Why didn't he simply call Stoker himself?), distracting himself in the meantime with letter writing and masturbation and school work.

To awaken and read in the morning paper you have lost \$2000 in one day on your options . . . , but surely he has other alternatives. He could take the crying student in his arms, hold her to his breast until her trembling calmed. Recently in conference with his German Romanticism student on independent study, he dropped to his knees and told her the moon blushed before the beauty of her soul. Could she possibly have understood his true meaning? The market is doing something, but he is afraid to find out what. The phone is there to his left, a cup of tea to the right. He prefers to pick up the cup, but first he stirs

the milk in with his index finger. I love you beyond all bounds, he said, but in the late afternoon light that came through the window, he couldn't tell if her smile were a real smile or a grimace.

His ex-wife calls. Her dope-dealing boyfriend is attracted to his Tandy stock, but reluctant to buy. It's a gamble? the boyfriend asks. That's all it is, he says, though he knows better. He drinks his tea and adds up his paper losses. He wonders if all his students will lose their open, unaffected spirits. Down another \$2000. He knows his friend from San Francisco won't call today. He stays up late listing ways to get by with giving his students less attention.

He ends the week, briefcase in hand, dragging in from another five days with adolescents, and collapsing onto the bed in his back room. Even his dreams are tiresome and heavy, the market plunges but it's not his moods that cause the swing. He knows his options could vanish; just last week he was up \$3000 and now look, and of course he's fully invested. Stoker calls. I hope you're afraid, he says.

When your option is at 1/16, is that really an option? Not when you've only four days for SLB to crest 120. He puts his afternoon class into a peer teaching session and calculates his projected minimum losses. They are heavy. His German lit student and he sit at the table, the light fading fast, and peer at details from Grunewald's altarpiece. He receives another call. Options are salacious, Stoker tells him; they go down on you. Some days his stocks decay so fast he can't begin to calculate their recession. He refuses to purchase a pocket calculator. His weekend strategy refuses to materialize. Why is the bottom never where it seems? Another day of students and market worries to face tomorrow.

Instead, for the next two weeks he gives his students more individual attention than they've seen before, for which his stocks sink deeper and deeper, his friend calls. By now your *Options* must be turning into a voluminous tragedy. Not at all, he says. But GE has vanished, he's into Charter and Bally, National Semi is down a thousand and Tandy two. His ex gives him a button, ca. 1860 France, on which a hare jumps over the quarter moon, but he can't understand symbols anymore. He waits fifteen

minutes for his independent study student to show for her last conference, but she never does, but is waiting on his doorstep with a bottle of wine and a lovely thank you card and, after their session on Tieck and Eichendorff, a hug. How wonderful there's someone that still shows gratitude properly, he thinks. An hour after she's left, he begins to cry, having worked himself into a state of emotional exhaustion.

But really, there's no need, the weeks stretch out ahead of him, he's two weeks off from work and then it's fairly easy going for a while—foreign fiction in the morning, the art of film in the afternoon. Old students turn up, a paranoid who wants him to put him in contact with any of his female students so he can write his female characters better. Next time will he not answer the door? What are, exactly, he wonders, his options? Can he ever know them? Will she, his past favorite one, ever say another friendly word to him again? Buy DTL, it's on the bottom of timelessness. It's Christmas, market closed. He scratches out notes and computations all day on acid.

Or consider these options he located in today's paper: a five year old kindergarten pupil found hanging in a closet in his home. He had looped a curtain sash over a clothes rod in his bedroom closet. A diver finds the bodies of a four-month old girl and her eighteen-month old sister floating in the Arkansas River after a cab driver has seen

the father toss them off the bridge. All afternoon he listens to Cecil Taylor, sipping wine, trying to come down slowly, trying to call Chicago, but the lines are all tied. And this item: At the Laurel Street entrance to Audubon, a girl's burned body, no identification, the gasoline can fifteen yards away. The mind's a self-defeating machine, Stoker tells him, but he's said the same himself many times.

Letters to answer pile up on his desk, he listens for the fluctuations, in class, out of class; once, in conference, he reached down and held a piece of her lavender skirt between his thumb and forefinger. How strange a moment—it was her menstrual blood, and for once he was there in reality so fully he was not there. You're bleeding, he said. Yes. Her voice so ingenuous and clear. Do you have something? Yes, she said. He knows he cannot teach forever. The market maneuvers do not in any way resemble his own mental ones. No one remembers.

In his back room he contemplates the photograph of himself in mid-swing during a baseball game twenty years ago; then, beside that, the photo of a starved Cambodian baby, its arms spread out, its chest the shape of a lima bean, its eyes wide and deep and open and dead. He counts up the tiny remains of his money again. All night he shuffles his ex-students through his mind like playing cards. □

ANIMALS

A.C. Hoffmann

The contractor building the house slashes a long gash into the hill—his workers bring their cars, parking them against the foundation. Trees torn from the valley by the bulldozer lie scattered at the edge of the new lane, uprooted boulders line the edges of the highway. Cars and vans bouncing toward the new house in second gear soon wear the soil down to clay. When the rains begin that autumn they are mired up to the hubcaps. An enterprising garage owner ten miles away is called to the site at least once a week and charges them portal to portal for using his wrecker.

The animals who had been living in burrows and hollow trees close to the excavation leave the area. The hibernators make new escape routes to their burrows, digging tunnels above the bedrock but well under the house. The foundation now sprouts fingers toward the sky as the men work overtime to close in the house before

the first snow. Each night flocks of geese land in the pond, landfall until the next dawn when they rise, wings quivering to meet the light, massing for another day's flight.

At first he lives both inside and outside the house—creating new paths in the woods, finding the ravine where a stream runs clear in spring only to dry in summer, where patches of ice form in autumn and disappear under the blankets of heavy January snow. He walks freely, never doubting that the paths and the woods belong to him. He sees no one, hears nothing—he looks down at the stream gliding passively, small boulders marking the path of water. There are snakes in the water, he sees them curling sluggishly. Birds dart among the briars seeking berries. Occasionally he hears bird song, but he is ravished by the silence. It is as if he has suddenly grown deaf, living in a land of trees and lost stone walls.



There is shooting in the woods—the quickening winter brings the animals closer to water, to shelter and forage in the higher hills. Sounds carry long distances. He can not guess where the hunter is stalking. Sometimes there is crashing in the thickets, he sees a deer once in full flight, bucking and rocking through the landscape, miraculously sure of foot on hillsides spread with sharp and treacherous boulders.

Dogs bark all night from the other side of the valley. Their baying echoes through the rooms of the house, the fog distorting the sound. Restless, he walks through the rooms, afraid to venture outdoors, cautious not to let them know he is here. In this wilderness it will be a long time before they catch his scent.

The trees grow back—saplings obliterate the contractor's gash, falling leaves disguise the broken terrain. The woods march back. Little by little, the paths to the stream close, pencil thin markings to the water. He knows the way. He wants no one else here. He is at peace. He drives the car into a gully near the house, covers it with tarpaulin and soon forgets that he has ever driven down the lane, into the web of secondary roads that lead inexorably to the interstate.

Deliveries of food are left at the end of the lane once a month. Soon he notices that he can manage two months before walking down to thumb a ride into the nearest village. With better planning he can now exist for three months at a time. No one is curious. Like the land which has begun to recover from his arrival, the village has accepted that he lives somewhere in the hills and his arrivals and departures are unpredictable. He does not subscribe to a newspaper or need a mailbox. He has no past to follow him here.

In the winter storms trees fall. He cuts the wood and hauls it to the house. He notices how the house no longer dominates the hill. It has begun to disappear now into the trees. He knows there are animals in the woods. He hears steps on the roof and recognizes that these are squirrels racing from side to side, playing games from house to tree, chasing each other up and down the trunks, sometimes taking flight and swooping from branch to branch like birds. He realizes that there are other animals, yet unseen. One evening as he peers out the door he notices an opossum drinking the cat's milk.

Unbelievably, after all this time, the cat disappears, walking away one evening into the woods and never returning. He whistles and calls and bangs the cat's dish for over a week. Now field mice move into the retaining wall and later he watches chipmunks racing to store seed against the coming winter. Some animal digs a burrow beside the lower level of the house; overnight a mound of earth appears as if a careless child has tipped a bucket of sand. Coming down the stairs one twilight he confronts a raccoon peering into the windows. He does not move. The animal stands for a long time taking inventory of the room, the rows of bookcases, the shabby overstuffed chairs—considering whether these quarters would do now that it is vacating the old ones.

Soon he hears soft mewing and movement in one of the chimney flues. His ears refuse to provide him with the necessary clues—mice, squirrels—who is it now living in

the flue of the downstairs chimney, the one he never uses, preferring to spend his days on the upper level of the house, looking out into the middle of the trees?

Shots again in the woods. Unable to sleep, he staggers to the kitchen. Outside frost shimmers in the grass. He heats the water, makes coffee. He does not turn on the light, saving the generator. A large animal steps quickly from the edge of the clearing—fur hanging from the belly, heavy claws already firmly digging into the sides of the house, as it climbs toward the nest in the chimney flue.

He fears that the animals will find a way into the house. He inspects the chimney flue—the damper is tightly closed, the weight of the animals keeps it secure. There is always a fire now in the upstairs fireplace. Before he goes to sleep, he closes the damper even though the fire still smolders and crackles. He carefully locks and bolts all the doors. Despite his precautions, he believes that animals have penetrated the foundations. On hands and knees he inspects each corner and the length of every wall. He has never made such a thorough inspection. He finds lost postcards, a catnip mouse discarded by the cat. He should be reassured, but he hears a crackling in the walls as if something is working itself inexorably into the house.

With the coming of spring, dead carpenter ants begin to drop from the ceilings—the walls are riddled. Each new generation pushes out the old, rolling them out through the cracks. The ants are everywhere. From the windows he watches the nests grow larger, swarming with armies of workers. Again some animal hides its young in the chimney flue, clawing up the side of the house, padding restlessly to and fro across the roof.

Another year. At night the animals press their faces against the windows. He is a prisoner inside the house. He no longer walks in the woods. The radio batteries expire, the generator falters, the pile of wood sinks dangerously low. There are still cans of food in the pantry. When they are finished, he will try to escape.

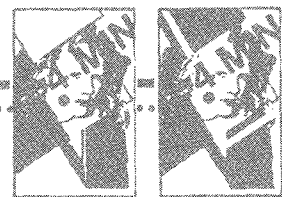
He hopes it will snow again. Then the dogs will stop hunting on the ridges above the house. He hears them now night after night. Lying in bed his heart pounding, he knows they are hunting him.

He heats the last can in the fireplace, scorching his hand while retrieving it from the flames. He spoons the beans into his ravenous mouth, scraping the sides of the tin long after it is clean. No more. Tomorrow he must walk to the village. Tonight, he will sleep inside the sleeping bag, only body heat can sustain him. He is already zipped into the bag when he remembers that he has not pulled the damper. Fear sends him frantic to close it. Down, down. The metal is hot, the fire still active. No worry, it will die soon. The smoke curls up the sides of the granite fireplace, but he is already back inside a warm cocoon.

As he sleeps, an animal presses against him, seeking warmth. He wakes, the pressure is there against his back. He shakes it loose. He falls asleep again. Smoke swirls through the house, covered in vines, cloaked in trees, lost to view. Only the animals know it is there. Now they push against the swollen door. It opens. Crowding into the house, pressing into every room, they wait for him. □

THE SUBJECT OF THE CONVERSATION

Walter Sanders



Start here. At lunch, I am told, the women in the office talk either about their children or their husbands. From reports, the children have childhood ailments and childhood problems, typical, predictable. A cold, a sore throat, a quarrel with a sibling, a matter of disobedience, a bout with the flu—the whole family will probably be down with it before long, of course. Concern for the child's condition elicits further complaints about all the trouble they cause. Sam began kindergarten and at the end of the first day reported that his jeans would not do. He would not return, could not return to school the next day in such pants. His had bell-bottoms, how could his mother have made such a mistake? No one in Sam's class had worn bell-bottoms to school that day. Solution: Sam got straight-leg jeans that evening and now no one, five years old or older, can tell, should they look at the area between his knees and the tops of his shoes, that his jeans are any different from those of the rest of his classmates. Of course children do not like to look different from others. But what, I ask myself, is going on here? Are the pressures on the parents or the children greater? I regarded the story as containing some humor. Sam's year went well after the change. His alphabet and reading and art work are much like those of other five-year olds. Or. Harold broke his wrist in a fall from a place he had been warned not to climb to. He got a cast. His cast is five weeks old and Harold is seven. Harold spent the day at the office with his mother and the other women who work in the office. Harold sorted papers according to their color for the women until the doctor could see Harold and his cast that afternoon. His cast was removed by four. The women didn't get much work of their own done that day because they spent most of the six hours that Harold was placed with them finding things for Harold to do that Harold enjoyed and would do. It is not known to me whether Harold reads books, but it is assumed that he can. He is seven and should. Emily and Stevie can't get together in any sort of agreement about what TV programs they shall watch. Maybe each child, a woman suggests, should have a personal TV. That's what happened in her house. Now each child goes to his room and watches whatever he wants. Peace about TV. But then, this other mother wonders, if she and her husband get another TV set what will they do when they want to watch a program and all the sets are being watched by the children? Occam's

Razor: unheard, because unspoken there, my wife informs me, cut out TV viewing until the children learn to share or compromise. I am privy, through my wife in the office, to all. Sticky, consuming problems that make me groan.

Worse. Husbands, yes husbands, are the source of much of the lunch discussion and complaints during breaks which occur as the occasions demand. They can do no right. They are stupid. They are insensitive. Something is wrong, I think, when I hear report of this public display. Where is the emotional support? the intimacy? This talk is different from that about the children. Bill forgot an anniversary and Susan knew he would for she began talking about the possibility two weeks at least before the day slipped by without a card. All the women in the office heard, over and over, almost each day of those two weeks, the prophecy that Bill, this year, finally, would forget the day. Sue's prophecy was fulfilled, she announced, triumphantly it seemed to my wife, the day after the event. And what did Sue do the night of the anniversary? Solution: she triumphantly reminded Bill that he had forgotten. What happens in their homes? What do these women want? What are they so angry about? When I go to pick up my wife at the office I am civil, cordial, pleasant, gracious at times and the other women, I have come to suspect, detest my wife but not me for what I do. But my presence does not stop them in their attacks, their bragging, really, of whose husband has been most brutish, most recently. My wife complains to me that she has nothing to talk to these women about. Awards should be given for the woman in the office who has suffered the greatest indecency the day or night before. Oh, the problems I hear.

Kathy's birthday came and went. She had drawn up a list of birthday presents George was supposed to get her this year. It was a long list which she read to all in the office. "He'd better get me everything on that list," she said, "or he'll never hear the end of it." My wife took a cake, which I had baked, to the office the day of Kathy's birthday. The cake was eaten, I heard, in a fury, for George had failed to get Kathy all the items on her list. Who do I sympathize with? I get lost in emotions.

Again. I hear that Helen's husband is reported to have done something really stupid, just what Helen expected him to do. "Clark is so stupid all the time," Helen said. "I

can't rely on him. I don't know what to do with him. I told him to pick up the cleaning on his way home from work last night and he didn't do it. And I told him that because of his stupidity I had nothing to wear this morning. He always forgets to pick up the coffee or the milk or whatever. I don't know where his mind is. Sometimes I wonder if he even thinks. He's so stupid." The other women in the office, my wife tells me, nod their husbands into the same condition, compare notes about their husbands' stupidities and agree that, indeed, men are out to make the lives of their wives as miserable as possible.

I have come upon these women toward the end of day, when work has ceased, when their husbands and children will be meeting and joining in their secret lives together. I wonder what these women will say when they rejoin their husbands and begin again living with them. Lately, as I have entered the office, I have heard the sound of the other women in my wife's voice as she greets me with, "So there you are, finally, I thought you were never coming or that you had forgotten me." It is no reunion. I am not late. I look at the clock on the wall hoping my wife will follow my eyes. I recall the eagerness, of a moment earlier, of my thoughts of seeing her again. I am coming to realize more and more that she is doing what they all do, only more tentatively since I am there. I wonder what has been said during the day, and my thoughts begin to dwell

on the possibilities among my latest blunders. I believe that my wife has begun to imitate the others. Maybe that's how it starts. But I notice that the other women are aware of the tone of the greeting, these days, and that they smile, slightly, not at my appearance in the office, but, I think, at the fact that finally my wife has begun to become one of them. When I mention the effect of a comment to her, I am told that she had not been aware. Privately I consider that worse than a conscious effort. I wonder if tomorrow my wife will join in wholeheartedly with a particularly juicy tale of some lapse of mine. I think whether I have forgotten to do anything I had agreed to for this day.

I can see it coming. My worry is a personal worry. I do not know how to escape the delight that they take in seeing one of us fail. It will not be long now before, I fear, I will become like George or any other or all of them. And it will not matter what I have done or left undone. I will have ceased being myself and will have become one of the husbands who irritates more than he pleases. The disaffection will not mean that I have changed so much as it will mean that the women in my wife's office have a new recruit. Somehow they could not bear her not joining in. I will stand guilty in collusion with the other men. What will I do with my civility and my charity? Which husband will I outdo in my cowardliness? □

CHILDHOOD

Peter Gordon

1954

Dance grabbed us that year. Dance and exposure and noise. The crowds were easy, the adulation, the envies. You didn't get pegged on conspiracies then, you accepted the anonymous kiss. We developed skills, we wouldn't founder. This was 1954 and we were early in our lives, coming to bloom. America asked for us by name: Mary, Marie, Otto (what the country would have given for Otto's yellow hair), Harry, Bonnie, and me.

Mary was 12, our baby dancer. Harry, Bonnie, and Otto were 13, while Marie beat me to 14 by three days, three lousy days. Really, we were only ballroom dancers at heart. We didn't break much new ground that year. We waltzed, we foxtrotted, we rearranged the syncopated feet of the cha-cha with something our manager, Mister Z, called the Pop. The Pop featured the male dancer (Otto, especially, was so adept) kicking his feet at the shins of the female dancer, who backstepped in counter-

point. Done by children, it was fast and lovely. Sometimes Mister Z dressed us in blue rights and we did flips and backflips on rubber matting. We flopped. Mostly, we waltzed, we foxtrotted, we Popped.

We danced in chiffon and tuxedo, under Mister Z's delicate invention. Mary appeared onstage first, curtsied, began to spin. Otto emerged from the wings, beautiful Otto, to take Mary's small hand. They waltzed. They giggled. They stopped. They watched Harry and Bonnie come dancing down from the north end of the stage, maybe waltzing, maybe not. Harry was skinny and Bonnie was thick and slow. But Bonnie dominated the dance, holding Harry at bay, smiling at his feet. Otto and Mary began dancing and smiling with them until something else happened: Marie tiptoed onstage. Dark hair, dark eyes, the beginnings of breasts under chiffon. The four dancers froze. The boys took heart. Otto approached Marie, begged for a dance. Marie refused. Harry ap-



proached and Harry was refused. Marie stood waiting, waiting. Who would come to dance with Marie? Onstage, that year, it was me. I danced my way across the floor, towards Marie. Marie noticed me. Marie noticed what a handsome boy I was. Not as handsome as Otto, but a handsome boy. She put out her hand and I took her hand. Otto took Mary's hand, satisfied with Mary's hand. Bonnie took Harry. We began to Pop pop pop.

Marie and Bonnie were miniature women (there was nothing girlish about the way they danced with a boy), aloof before performances, body-conscious, pretty. I guess you could say I was in love with Marie, who was in love with Otto. Marie was my dancing partner, my height, my weight, my age, but she was in love with Otto.

Then there was Mister Z, who only loved us, only understood us, as dancers. He loved to see children dancing. In 1954 we danced from the Atlantic to the Pacific, performing in casinos and old river ballrooms and glitter dancehalls, transported by Mister Z and his white Cadillac. Onstage, we were celebrated for our lightness. Offstage, we were adored for our reality. I guess that meant our bodies. Being superior, we wore white suits (handpicked by Mister Z) and bunched centerstage at lawn parties like pelicans. It was easy to feign poses for the photographers, getting wild, grabbing headlines out of the blue or out of the toilet (famous photograph of Mary yanking up her underwear in a Newport stall). We were the ones to mention. Mail flooded in from tiny outposts of American life, positively begging for our scribbled initials or locks of our hair (how the country coveted Otto's hair).

We stood for dreams discussed and not dreams deferred, that must have been it.

In 1955 we tried to go back across America, west to east this time, against the grain. It was okay. The photographers took less notice of everyone's prettiness (excepting Otto's). We were a rocket on a downward arch but still a rocket. The dance was rewritten and Marie was dancing with Otto now. Marie danced with Otto and she could have been dancing with me, it didn't matter to Otto. Marie mooned. Mary seemed less fragile. Harry filled out. We played shorter performances, highlighting Otto. Only Otto was extra-magnificent in 1955. Otto was worth everything.

But in September, in the hotel across the street from the Philadelphia Star Theatre, we lost Otto. Everyone lost Otto.

We were about to go on stage.

"Otto is afraid," Harry reported. "Mister Z is holding Otto's head over the toilet."

We wouldn't dance without Otto. Mister Z came to say Otto wouldn't come. Otto was exhausted, Otto was sleepy.

"I won't dance," Mary declared.

We knew what the photographers knew: Otto's beauty made the dance possible in 1955. Mister Z knew. Mary, our baby dancer, knew.

Mr. Z was shaking. "Please go dance."

So we tried. After spinning alone, Mary vanished. Bonnie and Harry, even Bonnie, danced hopelessly. Marie and I danced together again, it was very disappointing for Marie.

There was no Pop.

We saw Otto after the performance. He was lying on the bed in Mister Z's suite, wrapped in Mister Z's bathrobe. The radio was playing at his feet. Otto, smiling, said something nice to every one of us. We didn't know what to say to him.

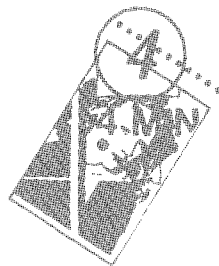
"Fred," he said to me, "I got sick and I can't dance anymore."

I started to cry, and Otto hushed me, and pulled me towards him so Marie wouldn't see.

The next morning, Otto was lifted into the white Cadillac by hotel bellboys. Mister Z tried to keep the curious away but there were flashes of light everywhere. In his last photographs, Otto was wearing a white sweatshirt and sky-blue yacht pants. There were groans because Otto's hair was underneath a baseball cap. The newspapers were speculating right there in the street that Otto was bald from disease.

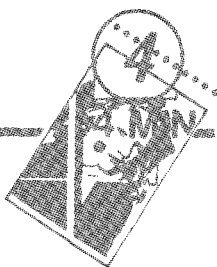
Without Otto, we returned to earth. By the wintertime, no one was watching. Mister Z cried and cried and cried. When he closed his eyes in bright light, we knew what he saw.

We were obsolete by 1956. □



CATS AND DOGS

Paula Goldman



The light spring rain dropped delicately against the glass panes. The cool wetness came inside the open screens above the bed, flushing her cheeks with the freshness of green.

Under a percale sheet of printed daisies, she caught his toes playfully with her feet. That was her way of saying good night and no sex, please. He slept in his jockey briefs and she, in a short, white nightgown from which her long legs hung out. She was slightly knock-kneed.

She smelled the grass and trees. It was too early for ragweed. Under milkweed, curled in a cocoon of bedding, she drew her limbs up close to her and waited for sleep.

The rain fell in big drops now, so that everything was wet and runny between the spaces. Cats and dogs, they said when she was a child. She saw them falling from the sky, making heavy thuds as they hit the ground and they kept on coming.

What if it rained just cats? A lighter sound. Or dogs? Grisly mongrels, with their hairy coats matted down, falling, falling, and no one to take them in.

"Alvin, please, let me in. Open the door."

Her head shot up like a cannon ball.

"Please open up and let me in. You can't do this to me. Open the door. Please! Somebody!"

Cynthia was wide awake instantly because she wasn't sleepy.

"Howard, listen. Listen. Someone is trying to get inside the Greenes', Howard. Listen. Can't you hear the noise? I think it's Marilyn, trying to get in."

She shook his heavy shoulder, roughly waking him.

"Leave me alone," he moaned. "You're always imagining things."

Last week, she heard raccoons on the roof and wanted him to get up and do what, exactly, he asked.

The rain quieted to a mist. A muggy blanket hung between the trees. And then the pounding broke loose again. Loud and fierce like the first time she'd heard it, subsided into softer and suppliant tears.

"Please, oh please, let me in."

Cynthia was on her knees, peering through the trees at the house across the street. A small woman with strag-

gily straight hair was at the kitchen door in her bathrobe.

The floods in the shrubs and along the driveway poured white light on the modern colonial. In the middle of the sleeping suburban landscape, it was eerie, Cynthia thought uneasily. She was leery of Alvin Greene because of those stories she had heard previously.

"I can't leave her in the rain all night. She'll get sick. I'm going over there."

"Mind your own business and go to sleep," Howard said, tugging at her part of the sheet.

She let go quickly, leaning over her side of the bed, groping for her slippers. *Where were they?* It was a good thing she didn't need glasses. Howard's beady eyes reminded her of snake slits when he wasn't wearing them. *I could kill him.* She couldn't find them.

Alvin could be dangerous. Once he'd chased his wife with a butcher knife across the front lawn in front of the children, threatening to kill her. For cutting against the grain of a brisket. Alvin was particular, but sometimes he overdid it. Don't you think so, Howard? He's a borderline psychotic, if you ask me. Mind your own business or you'll get in trouble.

Cynthia wanted to help without prying. She wanted to pry with the appearance of helping. She wanted to pry without helping or the appearance of the other. Cynthia told Marilyn to take it easy, get some rest, or maybe get a job outside the house. Develop a sense of independence, a better self-image.

Marilyn scheduled an appointment with a plastic surgeon for the works. Tummy tucks, thigh reductions, a rear end pick-up and silicone implants on top. She recuperated in Mexico for two weeks.

I'll tell her to come over and sit in the living room while I make some coffee, it will have to be instant, and then she can use the telephone. She doesn't have to tell me anything. Unless she wants to.

Cynthia coolly arranged the scenario, slipping her arms into the sleeves of her raincoat. She flew down the hall and the stairs to the front door, dashing across the street in her bare feet, jumping the puddles, but not missing any.

"Marilyn," she shouted, "it's all right. You can come to my house and use the phone. It's Cynthia. Marilyn?"

The woman turned around.

"Who are you?" she inquired sharply.

"Who are you?" Cynthia snapped without blinking.

"I live over there." She pointed her arm so she wouldn't have to turn her head. "I thought . . . never mind. Good night."

She cut through the grass, the water oozing between her toes, black and mucky. It felt good. She opened the door and hung up her coat on the antique hall rack, stung by what she had seen. Another woman. She walked up the stairs, drying her feet on the plush brown carpet in the hallway. She stood outside the bedroom door, deciphering Howard's breathing. Was he asleep?

She tugged at the sheet gently, and then yanked it over her head mummy-like. It was warm inside and she was wet and shivering.

"It wasn't Marilyn," she said softly.

"No? Who was it then?"

"I don't know. I never saw her before in my life."

"No? Well, then go to sleep."

She closed her eyes and opened them. It was raining again. But she was sure it wasn't when she was over there.

Or was it? She couldn't remember. Where was Marilyn? She got up on her knees and looked out the window. The street was dark. She couldn't see the house across the street. □

VINYL REPAIR

Allen Woodman



Noble was absently sprinkling salt over half a ripe tomato when he saw something black lying in the sand next to the shoreline. He had been re-coloring the vinyl seats in the High Tide Motel lobby from blue to red, and was now taking a few minutes for lunch. It was off-season and no one was in a hurry.

The black spot turned out to be an abandoned bikini top. Noble examined it. It had a label that read, "Cole of California. Size 36B." It pleased Noble to look at it. He hadn't expected such an item.

Noble thought about the act of a woman in white-hot summer pulling her top off and smoothing her skin with smears of cream or lotion. It was easy for him to love the things of people he didn't know.

Once he had a job repairing the mayor's chair. Some kids had broken into his office and burned holes on the arms of his desk chair with cigarettes. The chair was only brown naugahyde, but it had once belonged to the mayor's father. Noble fixed the arms and re-conditioned the whole chair so well that when the mayor sat down in it and rubbed his hands across the places where the damage had been he started to cry. Noble followed suit in a friendly, unreasoned way. It was like he had loved that old chair, too. Neither of the men were known for easy tears.

Noble held each cup of the top in his palms and imagined the breasts that once filled them. Then he replaced it on the sand where he had found it.

Noble walked back to the lobby and started re-coloring the seats. Colleen came out from behind the front desk to watch. He was going to tell her about the bikini top, but he didn't. He thought it'd be like telling a secret someone had made him promise not to tell.

"That red color's good. It's what the lobby needed," Colleen said.

Noble placed his brush into the Perma-Bond Color Coat can. "This'll color anything," he said, and pointed to his white shoes. "Guess how old my shoes are?"

"They look brand new," she said.

"Three years old. I coated them myself a week ago."

Colleen brought out a pair of white shoes from her kitchenette in the back. "Can you make these new again?" she asked.

"Wherever I see vinyl, I can do business," he said, and traced his fingers along the shoes' outline.

"They were my wedding shoes," Colleen said. "My Warren loved me so much that he tried to kill me with them. He threw me around this very lobby one night. My head kept banging into those chair legs. Then he pulled the shoes off my feet and started hitting me with them. He kept shouting, 'I love you. I love you.' What can you do with that kind of love?"

"What happened?"

"He shot himself in room seventeen. A guest heard the shot and told me. When I opened the door, I didn't even recognize him. I thought it was some tourist."

Noble didn't know what to say. They were just standing there looking at each other, and looking at the shoes.

"I'll restore these shoes free for you. But tell your friends I charged you three dollars," Noble said.

She offered him a cup of coffee. She had just made a fresh pot.

Noble sat down on the sofa in Colleen's room. The sofa was perfect. No holes or cracks in the vinyl. Colleen gave him some coffee and sat down beside him.

"Doesn't sound like love to me," Noble said.

"What?"

"I mean beating you up and then committing suicide."

"It was love," Colleen insisted.

Noble lifted his coffee mug in salute. "Then you can have love," he said.

Then he did something. He didn't know what else to do. He picked up her hand. He felt how soft and warm it was. At the same time he felt the hard bones under her skin. What good bones, he thought. He felt her tongue enter his mouth.

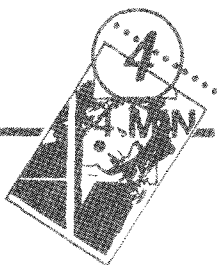
Afterwards they sat up on the sofa. Their knees bumped. "You're supposed to say something now so I don't feel like a whore," Colleen said.

Noble took her hand again and raised it to his lips. He was thinking about the tan lines that made cuts where her torso had been separated from the sun. The white sections of unsunned flesh seemed luminous.

"We're lucky," he said. □

MATTER

Sandra J.
Kolankiewicz



I write what I like, said Peter, quoting Steve Biko. He dug into his woven grass bag and pulled out a pint of brandy. The bus leaped over a bump and the bottle knocked against his teeth as he took a long swig. The small Mexicans crammed behind him in the aisle of the second class bus watched him with cold brown eyes. His hair was wild and ratty. He wore a mixture of heavy chains around his neck, a silver shark with its mouth wide open, and a few teeth dangling from slips of leather.

He offered the bottle to Kim beside him who declined it with a curt shake of her head. He stared into her eyes for a moment, shrugged his shoulders and took another swig.

My poetry is disgusting, he said, shoving the bottle back into his bolsa. But it's true. Whites masturbate the sweat of blacks. He coughed a deep tar and nicotine cough from his belly and spit between his legs onto the floor. I had a South African passport for years, he said. I know.

Merida is always this hot, said Kim. She was leaning her pack against a magazine stand, taking the pressure off her shoulders. She had been traveling alone and Peter had invited himself to hitch up with her until they arrived on the island. Kim blew a strand of hair from her face.

The train leaves in two hours, she told him. We'd better book.

Peter handed her his bag and ran off to buy tickets, threading his way in and out among the brown-faced Indians.

She stood in the shade but sweat covered her like a film of dew. Foreigners clamored in and out of the overpriced shops. A family passed, each member carrying a hand-woven hammock of cotton and nylon. The mother's face was creased with the heat, her husband sliding his wallet back into his back pocket. The children ran ahead, seeing sweets in every window.

Are we going to get cuddly? asked Peter. He was smiling wickedly at Kim. The train clacked down the tracks, grinding to a halt at every small village. Children peeked around the edges of their mud huts, shyly excited.

Kim chose her words carefully.

I don't understand, she lied. She stared out the window as if he had said nothing.

I said are we going to get cuddly, insisted Peter. He shook her arm so she was forced to look at him. Are we going to tumble?

The train started to a jolt. Kim sidestepped the question again.

I was married, she said. She hung her ankles over the seat in front of her.

Peter looked past her into the jungle, the dry jungle with its scrubby trees and bushy undergrowth. He saw the long-horned cattle, their ribs tightly visible, seemingly starving in all the greenness.

Suddenly he flung his wrists at her face, purple slash marks criss-crossed with stitch scars like thin railroad ties.

Look! he commanded.

She stared down at them obediently.

These are *my* wedding bands.

Let's get this straight, he said. I didn't follow you half-way across Mexico to be your friend.

They were in the lobby of the hotel and she had just asked the night manager for separate rooms.

Kim looked at him.

A third of the way, she corrected. The man behind the desk handed her the key to her room.

Peter put his hand on her wrists, tugging her arm slightly. She pulled back painfully.

We're both here, he said. He flung her arm away from himself, disgusted. You're passing it up.

Kim hoisted her pack onto her back and turned to climb the stairs. The Mexican behind the counter asked her if everything was all right. Life is lonely, Peter warned. The anger in his voice was a strong undertow. He grabbed his own key off the desk like a drowning man grappling across sand.

That's right, said Kim. With a nod she accepted the night manager's offer of help.

The next morning Peter immediately bought a bottle of brandy and stayed drunk the entire day. Kim spent her day on the beach, carefully avoiding him. That evening she overheard him mumbling to himself in the lobby. She could hear the frustration in his voice from the top of the stairs. He was sitting at a table, tearing up one of his manuscripts. He smiled at Kim over his scraps of poetry. The night manager was watching him warily.

Peter waited until Kim was close to speak to her. His eyes were tired and glassy.

Did you know that monks masturbate? he asked her.

She sat down beside him and crossed her legs beneath her, expecting more.

He reached forward and pinched her cheeks.

Your face looks like a chipmunk's, he said. And your hair is too curly, it's just passable.

Peter, she said suddenly, you're nasty when you drink.

I'm a vegetarian, he said. He took a long sip of his near-empty bottle of brandy. I make up for it.

Does it matter to you, she asked, reaching for one of his cigarettes, making his eyes meet hers and hold them, that you hurt people who want to care for you?

She lit a match and the fan spinning overhead blew it out.

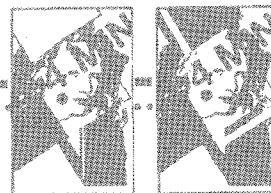
Does it matter to you, he asked, picking up the small box of wax-dipped matches, that you don't *live* life?

He lit a match in a quick sideways motion and held it out for her.

You suck it. □

GOING THERE BLIND

Brooke Wiley



And there she was, sitting at the wheel of a golf cart with a turquoise turban wrapped around her hairless head, laughing like a girl. Or at other times, I saw her at the bocce court, Nana Blakely in the arena.

Even though it interfered, I couldn't stop it. Rhubarb Ranch slipped into all my day-dreaming. I blamed it on the brochure. In it were depicted fossils playing games, fossils in the Jacuzzi, fossils under the corrugated dome of a Quonset hut. Funky and inventive.

When Nana Blakely saw the brochure in March, she had been impressed with the resort-aura of the Ranch. In fact, she thought it was a resort. Some place isolated, quiet and calm.

"Darlin'," she complained over the phone, "I keep hearin' one of them little transistor radios, even into the night. Maybe you could get them to turn it off."

She always had a clever lure to get me over to her apartment. The week before it had been aphids on the African violets, and the time before that, rats in the kitchenette. As for the radio, I knew it was nothing but the old age whining in her head, playing 1942's top 10.

Mama and Charlotte and I drew straws to see who would pick her up, and the next thing I knew I was nosing the family station wagon into the guest lot of her apartment building. The plan was to have Nana Blakely spend the summer with us in the mountains. As of September 1, her permanent address would be the Ranch.

"Here I am. I've come to pick you up," I screamed into the kitchenette window. "It's me, Goldie."

"I don't want any," she screeched back from the bedroom.

"I don't want any either." She came running.

"Why didn't you say it was you?" Nana Blakely searched my face hopefully. "Come to tell them to turn that radio off, I see."

"Sure. All packed?"

"All packed? All packed? It's not laundry day, is it?" She clutched her throat, gasping. It was a mystery to me how the LPNs at the Ranch would handle this habit. She stopped choking herself abruptly and fixed her gaze on me.

"How's married life treatin' you?"

"I'm not the one who's married, Charlotte is."

"I know that." She kept staring at me. "Remember that time you came to stay with us when Charlotte was bein' born. Got in Gramp's car and said you were leavin' cause you had to find your Mama. You were gonna' take to the road." Nana Blakely poked me. "Remember?"

I didn't. She followed me into the bedroom.

"I'm gonna sit an' soak in the tub awhile, that radio blarin' wears me thin. I know who it is too."

I fished her suitcase out from under the bed.

"Wanna know who it is?" She adjusted the paisley turban on her head, her fingers working like spiders at the web. "It's them Hungarian kids from across the hall. They had to cross the Iron Curtain in coffins like they were dead."

"Who told you that trash?" Nana Blakely wasn't listening to me. She was bent over the African violet profusion that sprang from her window sill greenhouse. She plucked, patted, tucked in, gently rubbed the furry leaves.

I saw her hidden in the Ranch's organic garden, whispering to the newborn tomato buds, whispering close to the soil.

"Where are them boxes, Honey, for my violets?"

"We're not taking those plants with us. Not enough room."

"But Charlotte said. . . ." She began her choking routine in earnest.

"Oh Christ, Nana Blakely. You go take a bath while I pack. And no smoking like last time."

I pulled clothes indiscriminately out of the highboy and off hangers, stuffing her ancient suitcase. One memory floated up and I saw the 4-year-old opening Mama's suitcase and finding confetti in the side pockets, caught in the folds. A big wedding, she once said.

"You comin' in soon to soap me down, Darlin'? I need someone to soap me down. . . ." Nana Blakely's voice trailed off suspiciously. I couldn't just ignore her.

We looked at one another as I sat down heavily on the toilet seat.

"What are you crying about?" She was smoking a Lucky Strike, daubing her eyes.

"Forgive me, Goldie."

"I'll clean it up later."

"Your mother says they have saunas at this place." I watched as she flicked an ash into the bath water. She touched her flaccid breasts distractedly.

"The day you were born, Gramp had an accident with the bandsaw. Two events in one day." She squinted at me. "Almost lost his hand."

I nodded. Golf carts, saunas, Jacuzzis; just a year-round camp for fossils.

"Dearie, just a quick soapin' on my back." She patted the edge of the tub.

"You know there's no transistor radio playing around

here. Not across the hall, nowhere. And they didn't have to hide in coffins."

She held the soap out to me.

"I don't know who told you that trash about coffins." I stood up.

"I used to give you a bath!" she exclaimed. "Whenever your Mama let me give you a bath, I put you in the wash tub. I did. Squallin' baby girl with the fattest legs, you were just like a doll." She dropped her cigarette butt into the tub as I slipped away.

I was day-dreaming of Rhubarb Ranch food, a nutritious and varied diet, the brochure said. Dragging the ancient Tourister behind me, I wondered if that meant granola, instead of Sugar Pops.

Inches from the threshold, Nana Blakely stopped short, her hands clenched around her neck. She wouldn't budge, and I knew why.

"No, I'm sorry, but we are not taking the African violets. Under no condition are they coming with us." Who was I joking? She was really starting to choke. "All right, just stop it with the hands."

I gathered the 30 or more plants onto her wicker

tea-wagon, every one of them in some stage of spectacular bloom, wasted.

We rode the elevator up to the 15th floor and went out on the roof where the heat wavered Sahara-style. First she couldn't decide where to put them. She pushed the tea-wagon around noisily, then headed for the fleeting shade of a condenser unit.

"Let's go," I yelled. "It's late."

"I want to arrange them" She started moving pots around, stalling. I called her again, but she ignored me. Everything shimmered and I was standing in Nana and Gramp's driveway, the sunshine dazzling, watching Pop get out of the car, open Mama's door.

She gets out smiling, but it isn't the same, something is wrong and I know what it is when Nana Blakely calls, *Come on, Goldie Honey, come see your little sister, come see.* I can't. I spin away to the lilacs and crawl under. Soon I hear her voice, Nana Blakely is smiling, *No need to be afraid.* I believe her. The memory disappears.

I walked across the rooftop and took Nana Blakely by the arm, pulling her away.

"Let's pretend you're blind," I said. "Just for fun, tug your turban down like this, over your eyes." Nana Blakely did as I instructed, laughing. I led her to the door. □

DAVE SMITH

REACTION AT THE SITE OF A FIELD HOSPITAL

Unloaded like produce to spoil
along the Richmond wharfs,
the boys lay under a brassy sun.
No Whitman here, only blowflies
on the bridge of the nose, in the heart,

like a nagging idea still alive
though you wished it was not,
was behind you like the graybeard
soldier who stopped in the leaves
where you lay, who pissed loudly,

saying he wished he was in your place,
except some fool would stumble in,
sure as God, one that hadn't
killed any yet, who feared his own
blood, and then he'd have to, and
maybe you'd done that already?

Cap off, bald, longjohns sweat yellow,
he listened to the spiking guns,
looked a long time, said goodbye,
leaving his blurred face held
by the itching air. Was it
his death or yours he foresaw?

Or was it some edge of life, sharp
as a bayonet, that dug at him?
Something from Sunday school,
way back, words so long abandoned
they couldn't be said, some shape
in the smoke there, as here, summoned?

The white coats of our fathers
stink and swirl as they hack
the blue-sheeny leg, the arm,
and I see their bent bodies
at work as through my skin
insulin blows like a bugle.
A red leaf falls like a scarf
from a white limb, from a face

one of the fathers has let drop.
Its eyes are blank as space
buzzing above the trees. An idea
bangs your throat like a gunbutt,
then turns your cheekridge numb
as light shears through limbs.
Something not entirely beast
lets you live, but needles
your rotting flesh, makes you eat.

The courtroom is filled with the ticking of a clock and the smell of mold. Listening to the minutes click away, I imagine bombs or mechanical hearts sealed behind the limestone walls. Forty of us have been yanked out of our usual orbits and called to appear for jury duty in this ominous room, beneath the stained-glass dome of the county courthouse. We sit in rows like strangers in a theater, coats rumpled in our laps, crossing and uncrossing our legs, waiting for the show to start.

I feel sulky and rebellious, the way I used to feel when a grade-school teacher made me stay inside during recess. This was supposed to have been the first day of my Christmas vacation, and the plain, uncitizenly fact is that I don't want to be here. I want to be home hammering together some bookshelves for my wife. I want to be out tromping the shores of Lake Monroe with my eye cocked skyward for bald eagles and sharp-shinned hawks.

But the computer-printed letter said to report today for jury duty, and so here I sit. The judge beams down at us from his bench. Tortoise-shell glasses, twenty-dollar haircut, square boyish face: although probably in his early forties, he could pass for a student-body president. He reminds me of an owlish television know-it-all named Mr. Wizard who used to conduct scientific experiments (magnetism! litmus tests! sulphur dioxide!) on a kids' show in the 1950s. Like Mr. Wizard, he lectures us in slow, pedantic speech: trial by one's peers, tradition stretching back centuries to England, defendant innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, and so abundantly on. I spy around for the clock. It must be overhead, I figure, up in the cupola above the dome, raining its ticktocks down on us.

When the lecture is finished, the judge orders us to rise, lift our hands, and swear to uphold the truth. There is a cracking of winter-stiff knees as we stand and again as we sit down. Then he introduces the principal actors: the sleek young prosecutor, who peacocks around like a politician on the hustings; the married pair of brooding, elegantly-dressed defense lawyers; and the defendant. I don't want to look at this man who is charged with crimes against the

In the Thirteenth Chair

"peace and dignity" of the State of Indiana. I don't want anything to do with his troubles. But I grab an image anyway, of a squat, slit-eyed man about my age, mid-thirties, stringy black hair parted in the middle and dangling like curtains across his face, sparse black beard. The chin-whiskers and squinted-up eyes make him look faintly Chinese, and faintly grimacing.

Next the judge reads a list of twelve names, none of them mine, and twelve sworn citizens shuffle into the jury box. The lawyers have at them, darting questions. How do you feel about drugs? Would you say the defendant there looks guilty because he has a beard? Are you related to any police officers? Are you pregnant? When these twelve have finished answering, the attorneys scribble names on sheets of paper which they hand to the judge, and eight of the first bunch are sent packing. The judge reads eight more names, the jury box fills up with fresh bodies, the questioning resumes. Six of these get the heave-ho. And so the lawyers cull through the potential jurors, testing and chucking them like two men picking over apples in the supermarket. At length they agree on a dozen, and still my name has not been called. Hooray, I think. I can build those bookshelves after all, can watch those hawks.

Before setting the rest of us free, however, the judge consults his list. "I am calling alternate juror number one," he says, and then he pronounces my name.

Groans echo down my inmost corridors. For the first time I notice a thirteenth chair beside the jury box, and that is where the judge orders me to go.

"Yours is the most frustrating job," the judge advises me sooth-

ingly. "Unless someone else falls ill or gets called away, you will have to listen to all the proceedings without taking part in the jury's final deliberations or decisions."

I feel as though I have been invited to watch the first four acts of a five-act play. Never mind, I console myself: the lawyers will throw me out. I'm the only one in the courtroom besides the defendant sporting a beard or long hair. A backpack decorated with *No Nukes* and *Peace Now* and *Save the Whales* buttons leans against my boots. How can they expect me, a fiction writer, to confine myself to facts? I am unreliable, a confessed fabulist, a marginal Quaker and Wobbly socialist, a man so out of phase with my community that I am thrown into fits of rage by the local newspaper. The lawyers will take a good look at me and race one another to the bench for the privilege of having the judge boot me out.

But neither Mr. Defense nor Mr. Prosecution quite brings himself to focus on my shady features. Each asks me a perfunctory question, the way vacationers will press a casual thumb against the spare tire before hopping into the car for a trip. If there's air in the tire, you don't bother about blemishes. And that is all I am, a spare juror stashed away in the trunk of the court, in case one of the twelve originals gives out during the trial.

Ticktock. The judge assures us that we should be finished in five days, just in time for Christmas. The real jurors exchange forlorn glances. Here I sit, number thirteen, and nobody looks my way. Knowing I am stuck here for the duration, I perk up, blink my eyes. Like the bear going over the mountain, I might as well see what I can see.

What I see is a parade of mangled souls. Some of them sit on the witness stand and reveal their wounds; some of them remain off-stage, summoned up only by the words of those who testify.

The case has to do with the alleged sale, earlier this year, of hashish and cocaine to a confidential informer. First the prosecutor stands at a podium in front of the jury and tells us how it all happened, detail by criminal detail, and promises to prove

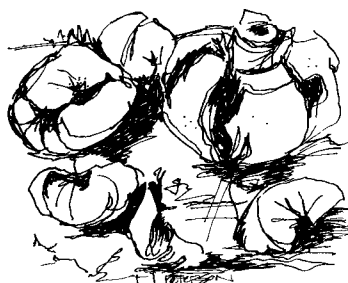
every fact to our utter satisfaction. Next, one of the defense attorneys has a fling at us. It is the husband of the Mr.-and-Mrs. team, a melancholy-looking man with bald pate and mutton-chop sideburns, deep creases in the chocolate skin of his forehead. Leaning on the podium, he vows that he will raise a flock of doubts in our minds—grave doubts, reasonable doubts—particularly regarding the seedy character of the confidential informer. They both speak well, without hemming and hawing, without stumbling over syntactic cliffs, better than senators at a press conference. Thus, like rival suitors, they begin to woo the jury.

At mid-morning, before hearing from the first witness, we take a recess. (It sounds more and more like school.) Thirteen of us with peel-away JUROR tags stuck to our shirts and sweaters retreat to the jury room. We drink coffee and make polite chat. Since the only thing we have in common is this trial, and since the judge has just forbidden us to talk about that, we grind our gears trying to get a conversation started. I find out what everybody does in the way of work: a bar waitress, a TV repairman (losing customers while he sits here), a department store security guard, a dentist's assistant, an accountant, a nursing home nurse, a cleaning woman, a caterer, a mason, a boisterous old lady retired from rearing children (and married, she tells us, to a school crossing-guard), a meek college student with the demeanor of a groundhog, a teacher. Three of them right now are unemployed. Six men, six women, their ages ranging from twenty-one to somewhere above seventy. Chaucer could gather this bunch together for a literary pilgrimage, and he would have not a bad sampling of smalltown America.

Presently the bailiff looks in to see what we're up to. She is a jowly woman, fiftyish, with short hair the color and texture of buffed aluminum. She wears silvery half-glasses of the sort favored by librarians; in the courtroom she peers at us above the frames with a librarian's skeptical glance, as if to make sure we are awake. To each of us she now gives a small yellow pad and a ball-point pen. We are to write our names on the back, take notes on them during the trial, and surrender them to her whenever we leave the courtroom. (School again.) Without saying

so directly, she lets us know that we are her flock and she is our shepherd. Anything we need, any yen we get for traveling, we should let her know.

I ask her is it okay for me to go downstairs for a breath of air, and the bailiff answers sure. On the stairway I pass a teenage boy who is listlessly polishing with a rag the wrought-iron filigree that supports the banister. Old men sheltering from December slouch on benches just inside the ground-floor entrance of the courthouse. Their faces have been caved in by disappointment and the loss of teeth. Two-dollar cotton work gloves, the cheapest winter hand-covers, stick out of their back pockets. They are veterans of this place, and so when they see me coming with the blue JUROR label pasted on my chest they look away. Don't tamper with jurors, especially under the very nose of the law. I want to tell them I'm not a real juror, only a spare, number thirteen. I want to pry old stories out of them, gossip about hunting and dogs, about their favorite pickup trucks, their worst jobs. I want to ask them when and how it all started to go wrong for them. Did they hear a snap when the seams of their life began to come apart? But they will not be fooled into looking at me, not these wily old men with the crumpled faces. They believe the label on my chest and stare down at their unlaced shoes.



I stick my head out the door and swallow some air. The lighted thermometer on the bank reads 28°. Schmaltzy Christmas organ music rebounds from the brick and limestone shopfronts of the town square. The Salvation Army bell rings and rings. Delivery trucks hustling through yellow lights blare their horns at jaywalkers.

The bailiff must finally come fetch me, and I feel like a wayward sheep. On my way back upstairs, I notice the boy dusting the same square foot of iron filigree, and realize that he is doing this as a penance. Some judge ordered him to clean the

metalwork. I'd like to ask the kid what mischief he's done, but the bailiff, looking very dour, is at my heels.

In the hallway she lines us up in our proper order, me last. Everybody stands up when we enter the courtroom, and then, as if we have rehearsed these routines, we all sit down at once. Now come the facts.

The facts are a mess. They are full of gaps, chuckholes, switchbacks, and dead ends—just like life.

At the outset we are shown three small plastic bags. Inside the first is a wad of aluminum foil about the size of an earlobe; the second contains two white pills; the third holds a pair of stamp-sized, squarish packets of folded brown paper. A chemist from the state police lab testifies that he examined these items and found cocaine inside the brown packets, hashish inside the wad of aluminum foil. As for the white pills, they are counterfeits of a popular barbiturate, one favored by politicians and movie stars. They're depressants—downers—but they contain no “controlled substances.”

There follows half a day's worth of testimony about how the bags were sealed, who locked them in the narcotics safe at the Bloomington police station, which officer drove them up to the lab in Indianapolis and which one drove them back again, who carried them in his coat pocket and who carried them in his briefcase. Even the judge grows bored during this tedious business. He yawns, tips back in his chair, sips coffee from a mug, folds and unfolds with deft thumbs a square of paper about the size of the cocaine packets. The wheels of justice grind slowly. We hear from police officers in uniform, their handcuffs clanking, and from mustachioed officers in civvies, revolvers bulging under their suitcoats. From across the courtroom, the bailiff glares at us above her librarian's glasses, alert to catch us napping. She must be an expert at judging the degrees of tedium.

“Do you have to go back and be in the jail again tomorrow?” my little boy asks me at supper. “Not jail,” I hastily correct him. “*Jury*. I'm in the jury.” “With real police?” “Yes.” “And guns?” “Yes, real guns.”

On the second day there is much shifting of limbs in the jury box when

the confidential informer, whom the police call I90, takes the stand. Curly-haired, 33 years old, bear-built and muscular like a middle-range wrestler, slow of eye, calm under the crossfire of questions, I90 works—when he works—as a dry wall finisher. (A guy who gets plasterboard ready for painting: it's a dusty, blinding job; you go home powdered white as a ghost, and you taste the joint-filler all night.) Like roughly one-quarter of the construction workers in the county, right now he's unemployed.

The story he tells is essentially this: Just under a year ago, two cops showed up at his house. They'd been tipped off that he had a mess of stolen goods in his basement, stuff he'd swiped from over in a neighboring county. Now look here, the cops said to him, you help us out with some cases we've got going, and we'll see what we can do to help you when this here burglary business comes to court. Like how? he said. Like tell us what you know about hot property, and maybe finger a drug dealer or so. He said yes to that, with the two cops sitting at his kitchen table, and—zap—he was transformed into I90. In this new guise he gave information that led to several arrests and some prison terms, including one for his cousin and two or three for other buddies.

In this particular case, his story goes on, he asked a good friend of his where a guy could buy some, you know, drugs. The friend's brother led him to Bennie's trailer, where Bennie offered to sell I90 about any kind of drug a man's heart could desire. "All I want's some hash," I90 told him, "but I got to go get some money off my old lady first." "Then go get it," said Bennie.

Where I90 went was to the police station. There they fixed him up to make a "controlled buy": searched him, searched his car; strapped a radio transmitter around his waist; took his money and gave him twenty police dollars to make the deal. Back I90 drove to Bennie's place, and on his tail in an unmarked police car drove Officer B., listening over the radio to every burp and glitch sent out by I90's secret transmitter. On the way, I90 picked up a six-pack of Budweiser. ("If you walk into a suspect's house drinking a can of beer," Officer B. later tells us, "usually nobody'll guess you're working for the police.") Inside the trailer, the

woman Bennie lives with was now fixing supper, and her three young daughters were playing cards on the linoleum floor. I90 bought a gram of blond Lebanese hashish from Bennie for \$6. Then I90 said that his old lady was on him bad to get her some downers, and Bennie obliged by selling him a couple of 714s (the white pills favored by movie stars and politicians) at \$7 for the pair. They shot the bull awhile, Bennie bragging about how big a dealer he used to be (ten pounds of hash and 500 hits of acid a week), I90 jawing along like an old customer. After about twenty minutes in the trailer, I90 drove to a secluded spot near the L & N railroad depot, and there he handed over the hash and pills to Officer B., who milked the details out of him.

Four days later, I90 went through the same routine, this time buying two packets of cocaine—two "dimes"—worth—from Bennie for \$20. Inside the trailer were half a dozen or so of Bennie's friends, drinking whiskey and smoking pot and watching TV and playing backgammon and generally getting the most out of a Friday night. Again Officer B. tailed I90, listened to the secret radio transmission, and took it all down in a debriefing afterwards behind the Colonial Bakery.

The lawyers burn up a full day leading I90 through this story, dropping questions like breadcrumbs to lure him on, Mr. Prosecutor trying to guide him out of the labyrinth of memory, Mr. Defense trying to get him lost. I90 refuses to get lost. He tells and retells his story without stumbling, intent as a wrestler on a dangerous hold.

On the radio news I hear that U.S. ships have intercepted freighters bound out from Lebanon bearing tons and tons of Lebanese hashish, the very same prize strain of hash that I90 claims he bought from Bennie. Not wanting to irk the Lebanese government, the radio says, our ships let the freighters through. Tons and tons sailing across the Mediterranean—into how many one-gram slugs could that cargo be divided?

Out of jail the defense lawyers subpoena one of I90's brothers, who is awaiting his own trial on felony charges. He has a rabbit-like look about him, face pinched with fear, ready to bolt for the nearest exit. His canary yellow T-shirt is emblazoned with a

scarlet silhouette of the Golden Gate Bridge. The shirt and the fear make looking at him painful. He is one of seven brothers and four sisters. Hearing that total of eleven children, I wonder if the parents were ever booked for burglary or other gestures of despair.

This skittish gent tells us that he always buys his drugs from his brother, good old I90. And good old I90, he tells us further, has a special fondness for snorting cocaine. Glowing there on the witness stand in his yellow shirt, dear brother gives the lie to one after another of I90's claims. But just when I'm about ready, hearing all of this fraternal gossip, to consign I90 to the level of hell reserved by Dante for liars, the prosecutor takes over the questioning. He soon draws out a confession that there has been a bitter feud recently between the two brothers. "And haven't you been found on three occasions to be mentally incompetent to stand trial?" the prosecutor demands. "Yessir," mutters the brother. "And haven't you spent most of the past year in and out of mental institutions?" "Yessir." This second admission is so faint, like a wheeze, that I must lean forward to hear it, even though I am less than two yards away. While the prosecutor lets this damning confession sink into the jury, the rabbit brother just sits there, as if exposed on a rock while the hawks dive, his eyes pinched closed.

By day three of the trial, we jurors are no longer strangers to one another. Awaiting our entry into court, we exhibit wallet photos of our children, of nieces and nephews. We moan in chorus about our Christmas shopping lists. The caterer tells about serving 3000 people at a basketball banquet. The boisterous old lady, whom we have all taken a liking to, explains how the long hairs on her white cats used to get on her husband's black suitpants until she put the cats out in the garage with heating-pads in their boxes. "Where do you leave your car?" "On the street," explains the lady. "I don't want to crowd those cats. They're particular as all get-out." People compare their bowling scores, their insurance rates, their diets. The mason, who now weighs about 300 pounds, recounts how he once lost 129 pounds in nine months. His blood pressure got so bad he had to give up dieting, and inside of a year he'd gained all his weight back and

then some. The nurse, who wrestles the bloated or shriveled bodies of elderly paupers at the city's old folks' home, complains about her leg-joints, and we all sympathize. The security guard entertains us with sagas about shoplifters. We compare notes on car wrecks, on where to get a transmission overhauled, on the outgoing college football coach and the incoming city mayor. We talk, in fact, about everything under the sun except the trial.

In the hall, where we line up for our re-entry into the courtroom, a sullen boy sits at a table scrawling on a legal pad. Line after line he copies the same sentence: "I never will steal anything ever again." More penance. He's balancing on the first rung of a ladder that leads up—or down—to the electric chair. Somewhere in the middle of the ladder is a good long prison sentence, and that, I calculate, is what is at stake in our little drug-dealing case.

On the third day of testimony, we learn that I90 has been hidden away overnight by the police. After he stepped down from the witness stand yesterday, Bennie's mate, Rebecca, greeted him outside in the lobby and threatened to pull a bread knife out of her purse and carve him into mincemeat. I look with new interest at the stolid, bulky, black-haired woman who has been sitting since the beginning of the trial right behind the defendant. From time to time she has leaned forward, touched Bennie on the shoulder, and bent close to whisper something in his good ear. She reminds me of the Amish farm wives of my Ohio childhood, stern, unpainted, built stoutly for heavy chores, her face a fortress against outsiders.

When Rebecca takes the stand, just half a dozen feet from where I sit in chair thirteen, I sense a tigerish fierceness beneath her numb surface. She plods along behind the prosecutor's questions until he asks her, rhetorically, whether she would like to see Bennie X. put in jail; then she lashes out. God no, she doesn't want him locked away. Didn't he take her in when she had two kids already and a third in the oven, and her first husband run off, and the cupboards empty? And haven't they been living together just as good as married for eight years, except while he was in jail, and don't her three little girls call him Daddy? And hasn't he been

working on the city garbage trucks, getting up at four in the morning, coming home smelling like other people's trash, and hasn't she been bagging groceries at the supermarket, her hands slashed with paper cuts, and her mother looking after the girls, all so they can keep off the welfare? Damn right she doesn't want him going to any prison.

What's more, Rebecca declares, Bennie don't deserve prison because he's clean. Ever since he got out of the slammer a year ago, he's quit dealing. He's done his time and he's mended his ways and he's gone straight. What about that sale of cocaine? the prosecutor wants to know. It never happened, Rebecca vows. She was there in the trailer the whole blessed night, and she never saw Bennie sell nobody nothing, least of all cocaine, which he never used because it's too expensive—it'll run you \$75 a day—and which he never sold even when he was dealing. The prosecutor needles her: How can she remember that particular night so confidently? She can remember, she flares at him, because early that evening she got a call saying her sister's ten-year-old crippled boy was fixing to die, and all the family was going to the children's hospital in Indianapolis to watch him pass away. That was a night she'll never forget as long as she lives.

When I was a boy, my friends and I believed that if you killed a snake, the mate would hunt you out in your very bed and strangle or gnaw or smother you. We held a similar belief regarding bears, wolves, and mountain lions, although we were much less likely to run into any of those particular beasts. I have gone years without remembering that bit of child's lore, until today, when Rebecca's tigerish turn on the witness stand revives it. I can well imagine her stashing a bread knife in her purse. And if she loses her man for years and stony years, and has to rear those three girls alone, the cupboards empty again, she might well jerk that knife out of her purse one night and use it on something other than bread.

During recess, we thirteen sit in the jury room and pointedly avoid talking about the bread knife. The mason tells how a neighbor kid's Ford Pinto skidded across his lawn and onto his front porch, blocking the door and nosing against the picture window. "I took the wheels off and chained the

bumper to my maple tree until his daddy paid for fixing my porch." Everyone, it seems, has been assaulted by a car or truck. Our vehicular yarns wind closer and closer about the courthouse. Finally, two of the women jurors—the cigarillo-smoking caterer and the elderly cat-lady—laugh nervously. The two of them were standing just inside the plate-glass door of the courthouse last night, the caterer says, when along came a pickup truck, out poked an arm from the window, up flew a smoking beer can, and then BAM! the can exploded. "We jumped a yard in the air," cries the old woman. "We thought it was some of Bennie's mean-looking friends," the caterer admits. Everybody guffaws at the tableau of speeding truck, smoking can, exploding cherry bomb, leaping jurors. Then we choke into sudden silence, as if someone has grabbed each of us by the throat.

Four of Bennie's friends—looking not so much mean as broken, like shellshocked refugees—testify on his behalf during the afternoon of day number three. Two of them are men in their twenties, out of work, greasy hair to their shoulders, fatigue jackets and clodhopper boots: their outfits and suffering expressions are borrowed from record jackets. They are younger versions of the old men with caved-in faces who crouch on benches downstairs, sheltering from December. The other two witnesses are young women with reputations to keep up, neater than the scruffy men, gold crosses dangling over their sweaters, gum cracking between crooked teeth. All four speak in muttered monosyllables and orphaned phrases, as if they are breaking a long vow of silence and must fetch bits and pieces of language from the archives of memory. They were all at Bennie's place on the night of the alleged cocaine sale, and they swear in unison that no such sale took place.

Officer B., the puppetmaster who pulled the strings on I90, swears just as adamantly that both the sales, of cocaine and of hash, *did* take place, for he listened to the proceedings over the radio in his unmarked blue Buick. He is a sleepy-eyed man in his mid-thirties, about the age of the informant and the defendant, a law-upholding alter ego for those skewed souls. Double-chinned, padded with the considerable paunch that seems to be issued along with the police

badge, Officer B. answers Mr. Prosecutor and Mr. Defense in a flat, walkie-talkie drawl, consulting a sheaf of notes in his lap, never contradicting himself. Yes, he neglected to tape the opening few minutes of the first buy, the minutes when the exchange of hashish and money actually took place. Why? "I had a suspicion my batteries were weak, and I wanted to hold off." And, yes, he did erase the tape of the debriefing that followed buy number one. Why? "It's policy to reuse the old cassettes. Saves the taxpayers' money." And, yes, the tape of the second buy is raw, indecipherable noise, because a blaring TV in the background drowns out all human voices. (Listening to this tape, we can understand nothing in the scrawking except an ad for American Express cards.) The tapes, in other words, don't prove a thing. What it all boils down to is the word of the law plus the word of the unsavory informer, versus the word of the many-times-convicted defendant, his mate, and his friends.

Toward the end of Officer B.'s testimony, there is a resounding clunk, like a muffled explosion, at the base of the witness stand. We all jump—witness, judge, jury, onlookers—and only relax when the prosecutor squats down and discovers that a pair of handcuffs has fallen out of Officer B.'s belt. Just a little reminder of the law's muscle. All of us were envisioning bombs. When Officer B. steps down, the tail of his sport coat is hitched up over the butt of his gun.

The arrest: A squad car pulls up to the front door of the trailer, and out the back door jumps Bennie, barefooted, wearing T-shirt and cut-off jeans. He dashes away between tarpaper shacks, through dog yards, over a stubbled field (his bare feet bleeding), through a patch of woods to a railroad cut. Behind him puffs a skinny cop (who recounts this scene in court), shouting, "Halt! Police!" But Bennie never slows down, beard wagging, lank hair trailing, until he reaches that railroad cut, where he stumbles, falls, rolls down to the tracks like the sorriest hobo. The officer draws his gun. Bennie lifts his hands for the familiar steel cuffs. The two of them trudge back to the squad car, where Officer B. reads the arrest warrant and Bennie blisters everybody with curses.

The judge later instructs us that

flight from arrest may be regarded as evidence, not of guilt, but of *consciousness* of guilt. Oh ho! A fine distinction! Guilt for what? Selling drugs? Playing hooky? Original sin? Losing his job at Coca-Cola? I think of those bleeding feet, the sad chase. I remember a drunken uncle who stumbled down a railroad cut, fell asleep between the tracks, and died of fear when a train passed over.

On day four of the trial, Bennie himself takes the stand. He is shorter than I thought, and fatter—too many months of starchy jail food and no exercise. With exceedingly long thumb nails he scratches his jaw. When asked a question, he rolls his eyes, stares at the ceiling, then answers in a gravelly country voice, the voice of a late-night disc jockey. At first he is gruffly polite, brief in his replies, but soon he gets cranked up and rants in a grating monologue about his painful history:

He graduated from high school in 1968, worked eight months at RCA and Coca-Cola, had a good start, had a sweetheart, then the army got him, made him a cook, shipped him to Vietnam. After a few weeks in the kitchen, he was transferred to the infantry because the fodder-machine was short of foot soldiers. "But I ain't been trained for combat," he told them. And they said, "Don't you worry, you'll get on-the-job training. Learn or die." The artillery ruined his hearing. (Throughout the trial he has held a hand cupped behind one ear, and has followed the proceedings like a granddaddy.) Some of his buddies got shot up. He learned to kill people. "We didn't even know what we was there for." To relieve his constant terror, he started doing drugs: marijuana, opium, just about anything that would ease a man's mind. Came home from Vietnam in 1971 a wreck, got treated like dirt, like a babykiller, like a murdering scumbag, and found no jobs. His sweetheart married an insurance salesman.



Within a year after his return he was convicted of shoplifting and burglary. He was framed on the second charge by a friend, but couldn't use his only alibi because he had spent the day of the robbery in bed with a sixteen-year-old girl, whose father would have put him away for statutory rape. As it was, he paid out two years in the pen, where he sank deeper into drugs than ever before. ("If you got anything to buy or trade with, you can score more stuff in the state prisons than on the streets of Indianapolis.") After prison, he still couldn't find work, couldn't get any help for his drug-thing from the Veterans' Administration, moved in with Rebecca and her three girls, eventually started selling marijuana and LSD. "Every time I went to somebody for drugs, I got ripped off. That's how I got into dealing. If you're a user, you're always looking for a better deal."

In 1979 he was busted for selling hash, in 1980 for possessing acid, betrayed in both cases by the man from whom he had bought his stock. "He's a snitch, just a filthy snitch. You can't trust nobody." Back to prison for a year, back out again in December, 1981. No jobs, no jobs, no damn jobs, then part-time on the city garbage truck, up at four in the morning, -5° and the wind blowing and the streets so cold his gloves stuck to the trash cans. Then March came, and this I90 guy showed up, wanted to buy some drugs, and "I told him I wasn't dealing any more. I done my time and gone straight. I told him he didn't have enough money to pay me for no thirty years in the can." (The prosecutor bristles, the judge leans meaningfully forward: we jurors are not supposed to have any notion of the sentence that might follow a conviction on this drug charge.)

In his disc-jockey voice, Bennie denies ever selling anything to this I90 snitch. (He keeps using the word "snitch": I think of tattle-tales, not this adult betrayal.) It was I90, he swears, who tried to sell *him* the hash. Now the pills, why, those he had lying around for a friend who never picked them up, and so he just gave them to I90. "They was give to me, and so I couldn't charge him nothing. They wasn't for me anyway. Downers I do not use. To me, life is a downer. Just to cope with every day, that is way down low enough for me." And as for the cocaine, he never laid eyes on it until the man produced

that little plastic bag in court. "I don't use coke. It's too expensive. That's for the bigwigs and the upstanding citizens, as got the money."

Sure, he admits, he ran when the cops showed up at his trailer. "I'm flat scared of police. I don't like talking to them about anything. Since I got back from Vietnam, every time they cross my path they put bracelets on me." (He holds up his wrists. They are bare now, but earlier this morning, when I saw a deputy escorting him into the courthouse, they were handcuffed.) He refuses to concede that he is a drug addict, but agrees he has a terrible habit, "a gift from my country in exchange for me going overseas and killing a bunch of strangers."

After the arrest, forced to go cold turkey on his dope, he begged the jail doctor—"He's no kind of doctor, just a pediatrician, for babies."—to zonk him out on something. And so, until the trial, he has spent eight months drowsing under Valium and Thorazine. "You can look down your nose at me for that if you want, but last month another vet hung himself two cells down from me." (The other guy was a scoutmaster, awaiting trial for sexually molesting one of his boys. He had a record of severe depression dating from the war, and used his belt for the suicide.)

"The problem with my life," says Bennie, "is Vietnam." For awhile after coming home, he slept with a knife under his pillow. Once, wakened suddenly, thinking he was still in Vietnam, he nearly killed his best friend. During the week of our trial, another Vietnam vet up in Indianapolis shot his wife in the head, imagining she was a gook. Neighbors got to him before he could pull out her teeth, as he used to pull out the teeth of the enemies he bagged over in Vietnam.

When I look at Bennie, I see a double image. He was drafted during the same month in which I, studying in England, gave Uncle Sam the slip. I hated that war, and feared it, for exactly the reasons he describes—because it was foul slaughter, shameful, sinful, pointless butchery. While he was over there killing and dodging, sinking into the quicksand of drugs, losing his hearing, storing up a lifetime's worth of nightmares, I was snug in England, filling my head with words. We both came home to America in the same year, I to job and family, he to nothing. Ten years after

that homecoming, we stare across the courtroom at each other as into a fun-house mirror.

As the twelve real jurors file past me into the room where they will decide on Bennie's guilt or innocence, three of them pat my arm in a comradely way. They withdraw beyond a brass-barred gate; I sit down to wait on a deacon's bench in the hallway outside the courtroom. I feel stymied, as if I have rocketed to the moon only to be left riding the ship round and round in idle orbit while my fellow astronauts descend to the moon's surface. At the same time I feel profoundly relieved, because, after the four days of testimony, I still cannot decide whether Bennie truly sold those drugs, or whether I90, to cut down on his own prison time, set up this ill-starred Bennie for yet another fall. Time, time—it always comes down to time: in jail, job, and jurybox we are spending and hoarding our only wealth, the currency of days.

Even through the closed door of the courtroom, I still hear the ticking of the clock. The sound reminds me of listening to my daughter's pulse through a stethoscope when she was still riding, curled up like a stow-away, in my wife's womb. Ask not for whom this heart ticks, whispered my unborn daughter through the stethoscope: it ticks for thee. So does the courtroom clock. It grabs me by the ear and makes me fret about time—about how little there is of it, about how we are forever bumming it from one another as if it were cups of sugar or pints of blood ("You got a minute?" "Sorry, have to run, not a second to spare.") Seize the day, we shout, to cheer ourselves; but the day has seized us and flings us forward pell-mell toward the end of all days.

Now and again there is a burst of laughter from the jury room, but it is always squelched in a hurry. They are tense, and laugh to relieve the tension, and then feel ashamed of their giddiness. Lawyers traipse past me, the men's faces like lollipops atop their ties, smoking, striking poses, the women teetering on high heels. The bailiff walks into our judge's office carrying a bread knife. To slice her lunch? As evidence against Rebecca? A moment later she emerges bearing a piece of cake and licking her fingers. Christmas parties are breaking out all over the courthouse.

Rebecca herself paces back and

forth at the far end of my hallway, her steps as regular as the clock's tick, killing time. Her bearded and cross-wearing friends sidle up to comfort her, but she shrugs them away. Once she paces down my way, glances at the barred door of the juryroom, hears muffled shouts; this she must take for good news, because she throws me a rueful smile before turning back.

Evidently the other twelve are as muddled by the blurred and contradictory "facts" of the case as I am, for they spend from noon until five reaching their decision. They ask for lunch. They ask for a dictionary. They listen again to the tapes. A troop of sullen teenagers, following in the footsteps of Bennie and I90, slouch into the misdemeanor office across the hall from me; by and by they slouch back out again, looking unrepentant. At length the 300-pound mason lumbers up to the gate of the jury room and calls the bailiff. "We're ready as we're going to be." He looks boneweary, unhappy, and dignified. Raising his eyebrows at me, he shrugs. Comrades in uncertainty.

The cast is reassembled in the courtroom, the judge asks the jury for its decision, and the mason stands up to pronounce Bennie guilty. I stare at my boots. Finally I glance up, not at Bennie or Rebecca or the lawyers, but at my fellow jurors. They look distraught, wrung-out and despairing, as if they have just crawled out of a mine after an explosion and have left some of their buddies behind. Before quitting the jury room, they composed and signed a letter to the judge pleading with him to get some help—drug help, mind help, any help—for Bennie.

The ticking of the clock sounds louder in my ears than the judge's closing recital. But I do, with astonishment, hear him say that we must all come back tomorrow for one last piece of business. He is sorry, he knows we are worn out, but the law has prevented him from warning us ahead of time that we might have to decide on one more question of guilt.

The legal question, which is posed for us on the morning of day five, is simple: Has Bennie been convicted, prior to this case, of two or more unrelated felonies? If so, then he is defined by Indiana state law as an "habitual offender," and we must declare him to be such. We are shown

affidavits for those earlier convictions—burglary, sale of marijuana, possession of LSD—and so the answer to the legal question is clear.

But the moral and psychological questions are tangled, and they occupy the jury for nearly five more hours on this last day of the trial. Is it fair to sentence a person again, after he has already served time for his earlier offenses? How does the prosecutor decide when to apply the habitual offender statute, and does its use in this case have anything to do with the political ambitions of the sleek young attorney? Did Bennie really steal that \$150 stereo, for which he was convicted a decade ago, or did he really spend the day in bed with his 16-year-old girlfriend? Did Vietnam poison his mind and blight his life?

Two sheriff's deputies guard the jury today; another guards me in my own little cell. The bailiff would not let me stay out on the deacon's bench in the hall, and so, while a plain-clothes detective occupies my old seat, I sit in a room lined with file cabinets and stare out like a prisoner through the glass door. "I have concluded," wrote Pascal, "that the whole misfortune of men comes from a single thing, and that is their inability to remain at rest in a room." I agree with him; nothing but that cruising deputy would keep me here.

This time, when the verdict is announced, Rebecca has her daughters with her, three little girls frightened into unchildlike stillness by the courtroom. Their lank hair and washed-out eyes remind me of my childhood playmates, the children of dead-end, used-up West Virginia coalminers. The mother and daughters are surrounded by half a dozen rough customers, guys my age with hair down over their shoulders and rings in their ears, flannel shirts, unfocused eyes. Doubtless they are the reason so many holstered deputies and upholstered detectives are patrolling the courthouse, and the reason I was locked safely away in a cell while the jury deliberated.

When the mason stands to pronounce another verdict of guilty, I glimpse what I do not want to glimpse: Bennie flinging his head back, Rebecca snapping hers forward into her palms, the girls wailing.

The judge accompanies all thirteen of us into the jury room, where he keeps us for an hour while the

RONALD WALLACE

AT HALF-MOON BAY

These gold hills. Everywhere
there is money.

Now on the freeway,
out from the ransomed houses,
beyond the cedar shake and stucco,
far from the greenback lawns,
even this land, reclaimed from sand dunes
in 1902, oleander, redwood, eucalyptus, and palm,
continues the fable of water.

Slumming at the Fish Trap Restaurant.
Deep-fried calamari and rockfish,
saltwater perch and prawns,
this rich harvest.
Who'd have imagined
so much from sea wrack and sand?

And if this currency were gone?
The sprinklers and pumps shut down,
the aquifers filled with the sea,
tidepools of mussels and stars?

Somewhere in South Dakota,
outside his rocky trailer,
an old man stands watering his hollyhocks
in a porcelain toilet bowl planter.
While here, on this rich night,
an old fisherman out on the breakwater
opens his wonderful bucket:
half-moons and silver dollars.

deputies clear the rough customers from the courthouse. We are not to be alarmed, he reassures us; he is simply being cautious, since so much was at stake for the defendant. How much? somebody asks. Up to twenty-four years for the drug convictions, plus a mandatory thirteen years for the habitual offender charge. The cleaning woman, the nurse, and the TV repairman begin crying. I swallow carefully. For whatever it's worth, the judge declares comfortingly, he agrees with our decisions. If we knew as much about this Bennie as he knows, we would not be troubled. And that is just the splinter in the

brain, the fact that we know so little—about Bennie, about Vietnam, about drugs, about ourselves—and yet we must grope along in our ignorance, pronouncing people guilty or innocent, squeezing out of one another that precious fluid, time.

And so I do my five days in the thirteenth chair. Bennie may do as many as fifty-four years in prison, buying his drugs from meaner dealers, dreaming of landmines, of his adopted and orphaned girls, checking the date on his watch, wondering at what precise moment the hinges of his future slammed shut.

—Scott Sanders

I don't like books either with unhappy endings. Life is sad enough without people writing sad books.

—Catherine Banahan, 1935*

In August of 1979 James T. Farrell died at the age of 75. Farrell was the author of more than fifty books and was best known for the Studs Lonigan trilogy which told the hard story of Irish working class life on Chicago's South Side during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Among ordinary readers and professional literary people alike, admiration for the Studs books continues to grow. The reputation of Farrell's other books, however, has not fared well. Thus it was that Farrell, long before his death, was known as a man who, in his youth, had created a work of great merit but who, in maturity, could not duplicate that early accomplishment. Farrell resented this reputation and struggled to gain approval for his later works, works which he believed were equal to or superior to Studs. It may be that his failure to obtain the kind of approval he felt he deserved for his later works contributed to a certain defensiveness that characterized some of his actions in later life.

In December of 1966 I wrote a letter to James Farrell in New York, inviting him to come to the campus of the University of Wisconsin in Superior the following summer to give a lecture on fiction of the 1930s. "This coming summer the English faculty will hold a workshop dealing with literature of social protest," I told Farrell. "We would be most pleased if you could attend the workshop for a day and speak on any aspect of that topic that might appeal to you." And hoping to make the invitation as appealing as possible, I added, "I realize New York is a long ways away from northern Wisconsin. However, northern Wisconsin is a very lovely place in early summer and . . . we could offer you a comforting sum of money if you would make the trip. . . ."

Farrell answered almost immediately. His reply was written in ink on four sheets of lined copy paper punched for a three ring binder. Like all of the letters he wrote in the course of our correspondence during the next six months, this one was

*Catherine Banahan, *Studs Lonigan's last girl friend in Judgment Day*.

Bulgarian Airlines

maddeningly difficult to read. Words, phrases, entire sentences were scrawled illegibly as if written in a great hurry by a man with very poor eyesight. Often the combined concentration of several readers including secretaries skilled in deciphering scrawl produced no satisfactory interpretation.

January 6, 1966 [sic 1967]
N.Y.

Leslie Cross
Milwaukee Journal will be interested in my coming to Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Hertzfel:

Thank you for your letter and invitation, and please forgive my delay in answering. I had much work, and bumped my shin. It was a bit painful.

Yes, I shall be pleased to come and speak. Do kindly send me details and the dates etc. . . .

I'll do my best to give a good lecture, but I always try. I lecture without notes. Some do not like that—the lectures come out coherent, and at least 75% publishable when taken off of the tape.

Could I have the lecture taped?

I have never been to Superior, Wisconsin. I have been to Milwaukee, Madison, Ripon.

There is a small duplicate collection of material of mine in the Milwaukee Public Library.

At least, my 41st book will be out by the time I speak for you.

I am at work on a series of 27 novels, plus, all concurrently.

Thank you, and with kind regards,

Yours

James T. Farrell

The letter was very good news. In northern Wisconsin, Farrell was a surprisingly well known writer. Many people had read at least one of the *Studs* books. Perhaps because of fam-

ily ties with Chicago, people in the area seemed to identify with Studs, his family and his neighbors. If Farrell spoke on the campus, he would surely draw a crowd. Moreover, there were reports that Farrell was a highly interesting speaker. A friend in New England had sent me a copy of one such report that had appeared in the *Boston Globe* a year earlier, written by Book Editor Herbert Kenny.

James T. Farrell lecturing is like nothing so much as a prize fighter taking on a man twice his size.

Farrell comes out punching and never stops. He would remind a boxing fan of Henry Armstrong, a former champion, who must have looked to any opponent like a perpetual flurry of leather. Farrell pauses neither for the bell, nor for water, nor to close up the cuts.

The man who wrote "Young Lonigan" in 1932 and "The Silence of History" in 1964 and heaven knows how many books in between has a demon of integrity in him and a donkey of independence. They team together to haul a mountainous load of indignation.

He squares off behind the lectern, throws back his head so he can peer through the glasses that have slid down his nose, tucks his chin between his clavicles in approved pugilistic posture and lets fly.

The ideas move much too fast for the words, and he can't shout the words out fast enough to keep up. Once in a while the indignation becomes so great he falls back a step or two from the lectern, gasping for the right word to give his uppercut all the strength he can muster.

When he is through the stage is littered with his victims. . . .

"The writer has a duty to tell the truth," Farrell cried out. "He has no obligation to make money, to be glamorous. God never told me to be rich. I don't want any part of the upper slums. . . ."

After receiving Farrell's letter, I photocopied Kenny's description and gave copies to some energetic English majors, asking them to spread it around. Along with an announcement of Farrell's appearance on the campus in the summer, I sent excerpts from the description to all of the little newspapers in the area.

I answered Farrell's letter the next week. I told him we were delighted that he was coming to north-

ern Wisconsin. I gave him the dates of the workshop, late June, early July. I told him the number of dollars we could give as his honorarium. I told him, "I'd hope that you would speak for an hour or perhaps an hour and a half and afterwards answer questions for a while. We will have your speech taped and you may have the tape." I told him that in preparation for his coming many people here would be reading and re-reading *Studs Lonigan*.

Farrell answered on January 16. He was unhappy with the amount of the honorarium. He suggested a figure twice as large. For that amount I give my best, he said, and never give the same lecture twice. "I propose your raising the fee." But he would come regardless of the amount. ". . . I gave my word so I'll do it," he wrote. ". . . I would prefer to give two lectures on the same day. I speak without notes and have gone over 3 hours doing this. I usually do not speak of my own work, but shall. . . . I can even give a demonstration of the writing." He would speak in the morning of his past work and of work in progress in the afternoon. "I'll take my pre-*Studs* stories, *Studs*, and then work in progress in the second lecture. . . . This will give the past, the writing, the editing and what it has led to. . . . I'll set down whole passages of my books in progress. I think this plan is better. What do you think?"

It sounded like a great plan. It sounded like he intended to write parts of books right there in front of the workshop audience! I went ahead and had some posters made announcing Farrell's appearance, and I wrote him in early February telling him that the Chancellor's office had found a bit more money for the honorarium but not nearly as much as Farrell had wanted. I told him that he could expect an audience of at least a hundred and fifty people, a good gathering for a university in northern Wisconsin in early July.

Farrell did not write an answer to this letter for several months. Instead, he began sending a series of legal size envelopes containing an assortment of papers dealing with him and his recent career. These pieces of paper appeared to have been jammed, handfuls of paper forced, squeezed, wadded together into the envelopes, the envelopes arriving creased, smudged, bulging, and bent as if they had been hurled in violent

haste toward some New York post office building to be trampled under foot by crowds until recovered by postal workers. The contents seemed to be the random overflow of his desk, his waste basket.

Farrell had been publishing in a journal called *The Smith*—"The Smith. The strongest magazine. The most general magazine."—and he tore some pages of his poetry out of several issues and sent the pages. He had been the subject of an essay by William V. Shannon in *The New York Post* twelve years before, "Farrell Writes On, Unscarred," and with a scrawled note, "When I was dumb & 50" at the top of the sheet, he sent the essay. ". . . Farrell, who recently celebrated his 50th birthday, is not only one of America's greatest living authors but also a vigorous man of affairs involved in many interests only indirectly related to literature," wrote Shannon. "Although most of his major works deal with the regional subject of the Irish of Chicago's South Side, he is one of the most widely-known and best-acquainted Americans in Europe . . . His dark brown hair is closely cropped and he wears colorless rim glasses. He stands slightly above medium height and still has the compact body and vigorous movements which suggest that he was once an athlete of potentially high caliber. . . . Along with all his other interests, he is a walking encyclopedia of baseball lore." Farrell sent a dust jacket from his novel *Lone-ly for the Future*, "This novel is the third in a tetralogy about young people questing after truth and self-knowledge during America's Jazz Age." He sent a page from the book section of the *New York Times* for September 17, 1966, in which a short essay of his on George Clemenceau appeared. He sent a Washington *Star* review of his work *When Time Was Born*. The review was written by Carter Brooke Jones and the book seemed to have confused that reviewer: "The prose poem describes in modern terms and with a subtly satirical inflection the story of creation as told in Genesis. I do not know, I must confess, why he wrote it or what he expects it to show, but his literary integrity is like granite and he still has enough influence, despite his enemies, to write what he pleases." The enemies were not identified. Farrell included a letter expressing confidence in him from Harry Levin at Harvard. There was a

photocopy of a letter from Lyndon Johnson at the White House complimenting him on an essay he had sent to the President dealing with the philosophy of John Dewey. "I spent some pleasant and rewarding moments reading your article on John Dewey," wrote the President. There was a second letter from Johnson thanking Farrell for his support for the Administration "in intellectual circles." "I wish I were as certain of my premises as a number of my intellectual critics seem to be of theirs," added Johnson. Farrell sent a copy of the introduction to *James T. Farrell Selected Essays*, McGraw Hill Book Company, 1964. The introduction was by a professor Don M. Wolfe and it said in part, ". . . [James T. Farrell] is a short, sturdy man with gray eyes and graying hair, quick and agile in his movements, warm in his manner. As he greets you at the door of his large work room his handshake is brisk, his voice eager with a slightly harsh quality, now and then warming to a rich resonance. In his work room, Farrell is a whirlwind of energy. As he talks to you, his broad chest sways backward and forward in nervous rhythm. . . . I sense in him an awareness of the endless tragedies and dead ends of life that nibble away at men's visions; but at the center of him is a burning core of hope and resolution to trace in full the artist's dream of his destiny. . . ." Farrell sent along photocopies of half a dozen poems he had published recently—"Sun and Ice," "Aftermath," "My Boyhood/Once upon a time,/Chicago, . . ." He sent an unpublished seven page single spaced mimeographed essay on Lebanon, "Lebanon: A First Impression." "Last summer I spent four days in Beirut. The city is charming and Lebanon is a small and beautiful little country. . . ." He included a copy of a letter he had written to critic Sherwood Kohn, who had apparently reviewed the movie "Studs Lonigan" in a Louisville newspaper. Farrell was unhappy with comments the critic had made about the movie and its relationship to the book. "I had no role in the movie production, and I have not seen the film," wrote Farrell. ". . . *Studs Lonigan* deals with values and Studs didn't make the acquaintance of Dr. Freud . . . All I'd say is that when I wrote *Studs Lonigan* I knew what I was doing." Farrell included a photocopy of his seven page introduction to a group of stories

by George Ade, "He called himself a realist, and he qualifies. . . ." There was a photocopy of a tribute to Konrad Adenauer which Farrell published in *Thought* and a short story, "Sunday Evening," which had also been in *Thought*. There was a tear sheet from the November 10, 1966, *Park East* newspaper in which Farrell had printed a column, "The World Is Today." "American culture will go downhill, and this nation will not realize any but a small fraction of its potentialities until the writers are able to work with a feeling of more freedom and dignity than they now command. . . ."

And there was much more.

If these were haphazard samples of Farrell's range of work and interest, maybe papers picked up at random from the floor around his desk, they surely came from one of the busiest and most diversified men in America.

Then in the latter part of May of that year Farrell sent another letter. Like the others, this one was written by hand, this one scrawled on heavy unlined yellow paper. It was six pages long and was a kind of postscript to all that advance notice material.

May 18/67
NY.

Dear Mr. Hertzl:

Miss Cleo Paturis will write you more. But I shall say a few things.

I have published 40 books. The 41st should be out this year, *New Year's Eve*; 1929.

My writings are listed in A Bibliography of the Writings of James T.T. [sic] Farrell, 1921-1957 by Prof Edgar H. Branch, of Miami University, Oxford Ohio. In the American Bookman, Summer-Fall 1961, my bibliography has been brought up to that year. It is being brought close to the present, into 1967 by Professor Branch in a forthcoming issue of The American Bookman. There are a couple of pieces of mine in this issue.

I have been much hampered by the market or there would be more writings published.

It is not true that I lived in (a) a Chicago slum, (b) a Chicago Irish slum.

Also, I did have education, and had I chosen to remain, I would have established one of the most brilliant academic records of my time at the University of Chicago. Nor is it true that I worked at odd jobs. I worked as a filling station attendant, 48 to 54 hours a week, six to seven days, and after the first few months

my earnings ran from \$140 to \$160 a month—good pay for those days. It was a unionized job.

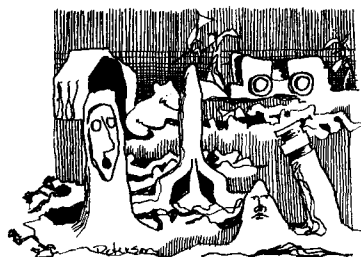
I was one of the 20 highest freshmen at the University of Chicago. I received A's in all subjects but Pol. Econ. and B's for these courses.

	Points
Three History Courses	18
A	
Two Pol Science	12
A	
1 Sociology A	6
1 Philosophy A	6
Three English Courses	18
A	
Three Political Econ	12
B	
	72

$$\begin{array}{r}
 5.53 \\
 13 \overline{) 72.00} \\
 \underline{65} \\
 70 \\
 \underline{65} \\
 50 \\
 \underline{39} \\
 11
 \end{array}$$

My average was 5.53 out of a possible 6 for my first five quarters.

By this time—June, 1927, I was determined to write. I let other matters drop. I



gave up a second honor scholarship, which I could have won, and then quit.

I went back twice and quit.

I took a course in Mathematical Logic at NYU in 1941 and my grade was A.

I did not write Studs—have a howling success, and then try to imitate it.

Studs was begun in 1924. It evolved into 3 books. I conceived Studs and Danny O'Neill as dialectical opposites.

Some writings of mine have been translated, at least, into French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German, Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish, Danish, Dutch, Polish, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovene, Bohemian, Turkish, Hebrew, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, Hindi, Japanese, Indonesian.

Some writing of mine has appeared in

USA	England
Canada	Eire
Puerto Rico	Germany
Chile	Poland
Brazil	Czecho-Slovakia
Argentina	Roumania
Portugal	Yugoslavia
Spain	Italy
France	Turkey
Belgium	Israel
Denmark	Lebanon
Sweden	India
Finland	Japan
Norway	Indonesia
Canada	Australia

My name has been in print every year since 1927.

I have had much journalistic experience.

I have written essays, two volumes of poetry, a book on Israel, one on Baseball.

But more tomorrow

yours

Jim Farrell

Miss Cleo Paturis did not write. But when word spread around northern Wisconsin and upper Minnesota that Farrell was really going to speak in Superior, Farrell fans of the region began writing and telephoning the university. They called for tickets. People telephoned from Ely and Babbitt up on the Iron Range wanting to know if they could get tickets. There were inquiries from the wealthy resorts around Rhinelander and Eagle River where the Chicago rich come to play. Some people from Madeline Island called to ask if they could come. Two newspaper writers phoned from Minneapolis. Faculty from the university in Duluth and from the community colleges up on the Range renewed our lapsing friendships. Even at a distance Farrell was generating activity. It truly looked like a hundred or more people would converge on the campus to hear him speak. A hundred people converging on a college campus in the Great North Woods in the summer is a most unusual occurrence, especially when the attraction is a literary person. Most people in the area prefer to stay at the cabin and fish in July no matter who is speaking.

Farrell's speech was set for 10:00 a.m. On the afternoon of the day before, I received a telegram from him. It was sent from Chicago and said he would arrive at the Du-

luth airport late that evening and it asked me to meet him. I made a hotel reservation for him and went about planning a schedule for his next day's activities: some English majors wanted to meet him, maybe for lunch; two local television stations wanted interviews; reporters were coming up from Minneapolis; there ought to be some kind of gathering in the evening after his talk, my home probably. At home that evening just after 9:00 I was getting ready to drive to the airport when the telephone rang.

The voice on the other end of the wire was pleasant, professional, male. "This is North Central Airlines reservations in Milwaukee. Are you the person expecting a Mr. Farrell on our Duluth flight this evening?"

"Yes I am. He's due in less than an hour."

"Mr. Farrell has had to change his plans a bit. He asked us to phone you and say that he'll arrive tomorrow morning, our early flight into Duluth from Chicago."

I said, "Is he sick or something?"

"Oh no. I'm sure he's perfectly all right. He just decided to change his plans a bit. Maybe he ran into some friends or something. He'll be along tomorrow morning. Let me check the time that flight arrives. He asked me to be sure to remind you to meet him."

The morning flight from Chicago was to arrive at 7:00 a.m. I was up by 6 and leaving for the airport when the telephone rang.

This time the voice was loud, eager with a slightly harsh quality. The man was yelling into the telephone. It was Farrell.

"Hertzfel?"

"Yes."

"The God damned Bulgarian Airlines did it to me again. I'm in Chicago. I'm at O'Hare. These God damned airlines screwed this thing around so I didn't get on the plane."

I said, "There's going to be over one hundred and fifty people, maybe more, over at the university waiting to hear you talk at 10:00 a.m. What'll I tell them? What'll we do?"

"Put 'em off 'till this afternoon. Tell them I'll give two talks, one this afternoon and another one tonight. Tell them it's the God damned Bulgarian Airlines fault. They made the mistake. I couldn't get up there because their schedule is all fouled up. Listen, I want to come up there. I told you I'd give a talk and I'll do it.

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Tell those people that. Anyway, I want to come to Duluth and look up some things. I've never been to Duluth. One character in a novel I'm working on comes from Duluth. I need some information about Duluth. . . ."

Farrell said he had a reservation that would put him in Duluth around 10:00 a.m. I said I'd meet the airplane.

I called a friend at the university and asked him to make some FARRELL LECTURE POSTPONED UNTIL 2:00 P.M. signs and put them up around the room we had reserved for the lecture. I called the English department and asked the secretary to tell the English majors that lunch was cancelled.

Shortly before 10:00 a.m. the telephone rang.

The voice was female, pleasant and professional. "Are you the party expecting a Mr. Farrell in Duluth today?"

I thought it was a reporter from Minneapolis, and I said, "Yes. I think Farrell's supposed to be at the airport pretty soon now. I'm on my way to meet him."

"This is the reservation desk at O'Hare Field, North Central Airlines, sir. Mr. Farrell is still here in Chicago."

"Still there? But he called just a couple of hours ago and said he was leaving there and would get here about 10:30."

"I don't know about that; that time doesn't sound right to me. Anyway, you see, Mr. Farrell seems to be having some trouble getting on the aircraft. He missed one flight last night and then a couple this morning. . . . Sir, do you mind if I ask you a question?"

"Go ahead."

"Is Mr. Farrell really an impor-

tant man? Is he really going up to Duluth to give an important lecture at a big university?"

"He sure is. I think he is one of the most important American writers of this century. He wrote a great book about Chicago, *Studs Lonigan*, ever read it?"

"Well, I don't mean to put him down or anything, it's just that he acts so funny. He can't seem to get on the aircraft and he's dressed funny. He's been here in and out of the airport all night long and he keeps coming back here to the counter but he can't seem to get on the aircraft."

"What do you mean funny? Is he drinking or something?"

"Oh no, sir. It's more like he keeps forgetting or something."

"Maybe he's sick. Is there a doctor around there somewhere you could get to look at him?"

"I don't think he's sick. He doesn't look sick. He seems pretty sure he can take care of himself."

I said, "How is he dressed funny?"

"That's why I sort of wondered about him giving a speech at a big university. See, he's wearing. . . . I think they're carpet slippers. . . . and an army overcoat over his suit. The overcoat's all greasy."

"My God. He's never been to Duluth or Superior. He probably thinks it's still winter up here in the North Country."

She said, "Are you sure you want him up there?"

"Absolutely. There's more than one hundred and fifty people over at the university right now waiting to hear him speak. We changed the time to 2:00 p.m. Can you get him here by then?"

"Well, sir, there's a plane out of here in about half an hour that'll get him to Duluth by 1:30. That's the

last one until tonight. I can't promise he'll be on it, but I'll try. He's over getting something to eat right now. When he comes back—he'll be back, I know—I'll give him this big piece of paper with the gate number and the time and the flight number on it. I'll tell him where he's supposed to go. I'll write it all down on the paper in big letters even though I don't think he has trouble seeing. He has these thick glasses on. Anyway, after the flight leaves I'll call you and let you know if he gets on it. That's the best I can do. I can't take him down and put him on the aircraft, you know. I don't know why he keeps missing those flights. . . ."

I called the English office at the university and told them to spread the word, Farrell would arrive at 1:30, lecture as rescheduled at 2:00 p.m. The department secretary said there had been a lot of calls that morning about the speaker. He sure has a lot of people talking about him, she said.

I waited. It was nearly 11:00 when the phone rang.

"Sir?" It was the friendly, professional female voice, this time rather soft, subdued. "Well, he didn't get on the aircraft."

I said, "For God's sake why not?"
 "I don't know. I don't know why he didn't make it. I gave him the paper with all the information on it in plenty of time and then he went over to a phone booth and I watched him making a call or trying to make a call; he seemed to be having some kind of trouble with the phone there. Anyway, then I got busy and when I looked for him again he was gone but when I checked with the gate the flight had already left and he wasn't on it. . . . Oh my God, here he comes now. . . . Do you want to talk to him?"

"Sure. I guess."

There were muffled sounds in the receiver, voices, a soft thud, then Farrell's voice, "Hertz?"

"Yes."

"The God damned Bulgarian Airlines did it to me again. I'm still here in Chicago."

"I know. I'm really sorry. Look, why didn't you get on that airplane? There's over one hundred and fifty people over at the university waiting to hear you speak this afternoon, just a couple of hours from now, and you're still in Chicago."

"Hell, I know that. I know where I am. It's not my fault. It's the God

damned airlines. They've done this kind of thing before."

"Well, it's too late now. There's no way you can get up here to talk to them now. Tomorrow's a holiday because of the Fourth. I'm really disappointed. Those people are going to be disappointed. We're all sorry. I'll have to go over there and tell those people something."

"Listen," he was excited, talking loud into the phone. "I told you it isn't my fault! I want to come up there! Listen, if I ever hear anybody say you told them I missed a speaking date in Superior, Wisconsin, I'll come up there and break your nose."

There was a poet on the campus that summer, a Pulitzer prize winner, clever, rhythmic, young, learned. I thought maybe he could substitute for Farrell, maybe give a lecture on symbolism. But when word got out that Farrell wasn't coming after all, that a poet was going to speak, the audience just evaporated, went back to the lakes and the fish. When I looked in the lecture room at 2:00 P.M., only fifteen or twenty people were in the audience, mostly high school teachers back for summer refreshers.

In the middle of July I received one more letter from Farrell. Like the others, it was written in ink in a difficult hand.

July 7/67
 NY

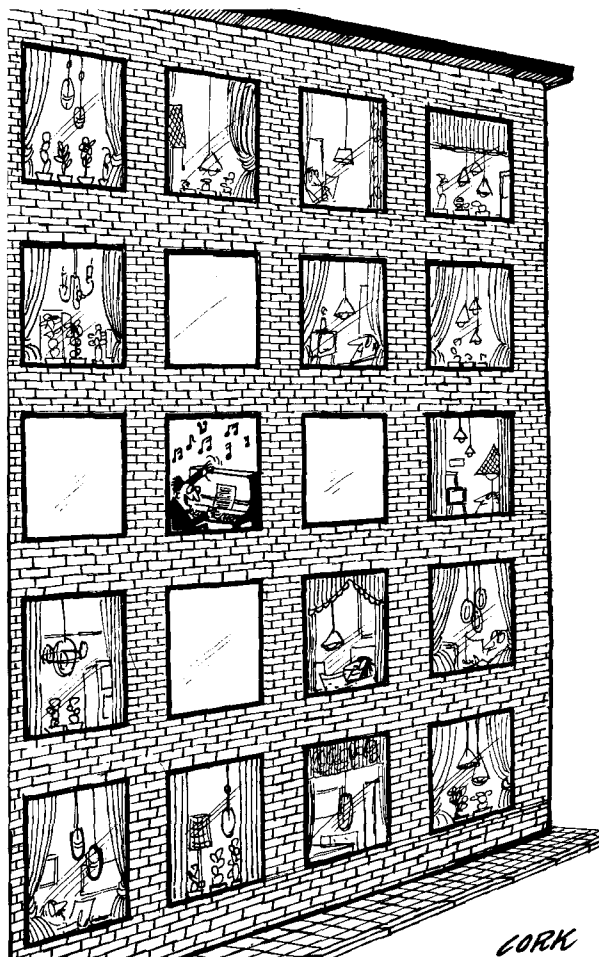
Dear Leo Hertzig [sic]

I am most sorry about the fiasco, and it meant a considerable loss to me. Naturally I can't hold you responsible. My reservation was confirmed by phone and then in the morning, no one knew anything about it. My luggage was sent, but I could not get on the plane. The margin of time was small because the motel at which I stayed was slow in getting me to the air port, and did not ring me when it should have.

I shot around the air port to the extent that if I did not have a healthy heart, I'd have had an attack.

I was trying to telephone you, too, and got a phone that wouldn't take coins.

I had to wait 26 to 27 hours to get my luggage back. The sneakers I was wearing cracked at the soles, and I nearly broke a leg or an ankle on a motel carpet. This was while I was waiting for my luggage to come back. Some damned thing happened to my hands, and they began to peel. I had to write with gloves on for a couple of days.



Now I must cut down on my sleep in order to do extra writing in order to make up for loss and costs.

When I spoke with you on the phone, I was in a rage of frustration.

I can't hold myself as negligent.

At all events, I am sorry. . . .

I would make a suggestion . . . In the future, if the university can make the travel arrangements for lecturers, these fiascos can be avoided, possibly.

On top of it all—I must get to Duluth sometime, and look up some things for my work.

An important character in my work is to, and must, come from Duluth.

It was a fiasco, and I can say no more to add to the above. I know I would have enjoyed meeting you, and I'd have learned much.

My lectures have been uniformly successful for a long time . . . and every one has received an ovation during the last 6 years. The lecture would have been no difficulty.

Cordially,

Jim Farrell

PS I had a similar experience once—in Karachi, when a plane got lost over Ceylon and the air people did not bother to get me on another plane for Beirut. There was a reception for me with the President of Lebanon attending.

I got there a day late and I had to scream and use influence to get out of Karachi. JF

PS Better than the university arranging reservations, a link up of a number of universities could be made with a reliable travel agent, or the American Express. Possibly, this latter method would be a means of a few students getting part time work.

And the American Express might be gotten to give one or two awards.

JF.

Leslie Cross, Book Editor of the *Milwaukee Journal*, was the only journalist who took note of Farrell's presence in Milwaukee. "Victim of a transportation snarlup, James T. Farrell was in Milwaukee briefly the other day—and acknowledged with surprising equanimity that things might have been worse. . . . He was grounded, however, for nearly three days at a motel near O'Hare field outside Chicago after a flight from New York, and never got to Superior," wrote Cross. "'It wasn't a total loss,' said Farrell. 'I managed to do some writing, at least. I write every minute I can.'"

—Leo J. Hertz

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The Creative Explosion: An Inquiry into the Origins of Art and Religion, by John Pfeiffer. Harper & Row. \$29.95

John Pfeiffer's recent inquiry into the spectacular emergence of human art during the last Ice Age may not cause a dramatic shift in Washington's budgetary priorities from defense to support of the National Endowment for the Arts. Nonetheless, persons with responsibility for the future of life would do well to attend to his insights. He makes a convincing case that art has been as essential to the survival of the human species as subsistence and reproduction.

Pfeiffer argues that Cro-Magnon humans, the first humans who looked like us, were able to survive the growing pressures of population density and increased hazards that began some 30,000 years ago by using their splendid cave paintings in mnemonic ways. He speculates that the caves were rather like sacred libraries where painted images, mostly of animals, were organized in spatial hierarchies to dramatically enhance the memory of shamans and initiates.

The appearance of Cro-Magnon art roughly parallels the emergence of new tools that were both more numerous and more complex than those used by the ubiquitous *Homo sapiens* race of hunters and gatherers called Neanderthals. Archeological evidence suggests that the Neanderthals, who populated the earth for thousands of years, were supplanted by new hunting and gathering Cro-Magnon peoples in Western Europe, although the reasons for the Neanderthals' disappearance is still a mystery. Whatever may have caused their demise, the Neanderthals were considerably more rugged than the "gracile" Cro-Magnon race which replaced them at the beginning of the Upper Paleolithic Stone Age some 35,000 years ago. (Despite his admiration for Cro-Magnon peoples, Pfeiffer voices some skepticism of their designation as *Homo sapiens sapiens*, or "doubly thinking people," and thinks new archeological finds may reveal that Neanderthals had considerably more sophistication than is now conceded. He notes that some Neanderthal grave sites contain tools and "perhaps chunks of meat as if for use in an afterlife or spirit world. Bear skulls and ibex horns arranged

Art and Religion: Origins

in patterns around some graves suggest rituals." He speculates that Neanderthals made pictures in sand and on other perishable materials, even as contemporary hunting and gathering peoples do today, although he grants that they must have lived for millenia in conservative monotony with relatively little change.)

It is the dramatic transformation in culture as evidenced by the more permanent Cro-Magnon cave art that Pfeiffer seeks to explain. He interprets the art as expressing not only the emergence of a new species, but more significantly, a "brand-new kind of evolution." In contrast to the eons of gradual change when hominid evolution was controlled by biology—when our ancestors were locked in the grip of genetic heredity—the Upper Paleolithic Age marks the beginning of "The great release, the breaking away which is our uniqueness . . ."

Furthermore, the release is not something remote that happened in times out of mind, in an interesting but essentially irrelevant past. From the standpoint of a human lifespan any change dating back 30,000 or more years must indeed seem like ancient history. But it is the blink of an eyelid ago on the evolutionary time scale. We are very young, an infant species just beginning to wonder and observe and explore. The process which gathered momentum among the Cro-Magnons continues to accelerate in our times. The same forces which drive us today drove our recent ancestors underground with paints, engraving tools, lamps, and notions about their place in the scheme of things. That is the basic reason for studying the art in its Upper Paleolithic context.

Pfeiffer readily acknowledges that he is influenced by the seminal work of André Leroi-Gourhan several decades ago. Leroi-Gourhan was the

first to see the seriousness of the cave art as a significant expression of evolutionary focus in its own right when he suggested that it might represent something other than "hunting magic," a thesis long held under the influence of Abbé Henri Breuil, whose lifetime was spent in painstaking recording of the engravings and paintings in caves scattered throughout northern Spain and southern France. Rather than seeing the art as a kind of voodoo magic, in which paintings of animals penetrated by spears would assure success in the hunt, Leroi-Gourhan saw the paintings of each cave as a unit of orderly composition. Clusters of animal images in certain locations, as along labyrinthine passageways or in hidden "sanctuaries" deep within the cave, suggested something more complex than mere hunting magic. Rather, the images might have had a totemistic or metaphoric function, with certain species of animals representing human genders or relationships among human bands or clans. Pfeiffer leans toward the idea that the images were placed where they were to enhance ritual and ceremony in the initiation of the young, as they entered the cave to be imprinted with the adult roles and ethics that would help them cope with the "information explosion" threatening their survival.

To appreciate this interpretation, one should, as Pfeiffer suggests, visit the caves for a direct experience of their powerful images. Sitting with him at a shaded table in front of the Cro-Magnon Hotel in Les Eyzies, France, last summer, I listened to his enthusiastic suggestions about which caves of the area to visit first. My most prized possession at that moment was a letter from the Director of Prehistoric Antiquities granting me permission, two days hence, to enter the Lascaux Cave, the most beautifully preserved of all the French caves, now closed to the public. But first I would climb the bluffs outside the village of Les Eyzies, to enter Font de Gaume.

I had spent months of reading in preparation for the cave visits, but I was unprepared for what I experienced in Font de Gaume. It took some time to adjust to the chill, dark silence of the cave's interior. Led by one of the cave's chief researchers,

Paulette Daubisse, and my guide, Isabelle Marfond, I walked cautiously and with growing awe through the damp and narrow passageway into the womblike interior gallery, and then off to the side to view a small, concave niche lined with painted engravings of bison. My guide spoke quietly in English as we walked, pausing to point her flashlight at an angle so I could see the shadowed lines of the small engravings—mostly bison, one jumping horse, a mammoth, some tectiform signs, a rhinoceros, some reindeer—lining the passageway at clustered intervals. Above our heads the light cast ominous shadows off the shelves and contours of the winding limestone labyrinth. I felt reverence, wonder, respect, as though I were in a sacred place.

Twice in this cave I was moved to tears. The first time at the sight of a small engraving of a red doe kneeling on her forelegs; facing her, with his long horns arched above her, bent a black stag to lick her forehead. The second time, as we were leaving the cave, Mlle. Marfond asked me to stoop and look up and into a small niche where, outlined by black paint, was the negative image of a left hand—exactly the size of my own. It seemed to be a modest signature, hidden from view unless one got down on one's knees to peer up into the crevice. A profound sense of my own deep connection to that artist is with me yet.

I had not yet read John Pfeiffer's fascinating descriptions and arguments about the cave art, but reading them now, as an aficionado of Cro-Magnon culture, I am compelled to agree that the caves were places of ceremony and magic and learning. This seems especially so in Lascaux, where the spaciousness of the rotunda and gallery, and the immense paintings of bulls (one over 15 feet long), bison and horses present a dramatic contrast to the narrow labyrinths of Font de Gaume with its delicately sensitive engravings. My brief experience of Lascaux suggested it might have been a place of splendid pomp and public celebration, partly because of its spaciousness and partly because its paintings of vivid color against light limestone are in such a remarkable state of preservation. The guide, Jacques Marsal—who was one of the four boys who discovered the cave in 1940—told me it looked today exactly as it did when he first saw it. Archeologi-

cal evidence suggests its paintings are 2,000 years more recent than Font de Gaume, and that it was used for only about 500 years before being somehow sealed off for 15 millennia.

One of the great benefits of Pfeiffer's book is that he gives the reader vivid descriptions of his own vast experience in the caves, so one can appreciate the context of the art and its many evocative ambiguities. The book is also valuable for its summaries of recent archeological finds. One of the most baffling is his account of the small El Juyo cave near the northern coast of Spain where a careful excavation in 1979 revealed artifacts of remarkable complexity. Toward the back of the cave, archeologists unearthed a four by six foot slab of stalagmite horizontally supported by several upright flat stones and a row of 26 bone spear points. Beneath this were four layers of bone and pigment rubble alternating with cylindrical columns of earth in rosette patterns. Each rosette layer had its empty spaces filled in with white clay, and the top of each rosette was smeared with colored clays to form a mosaic pattern, "the archeological sandwich built up into a mound some 3 feet high and encased in an outer coating or shell of yellow clay."

A few feet from the mound and four feet beneath the cave floor, the archeologists unearthed a crude stone face standing upright, its right side that of an adult male engraved with a moustache, nose and beard, but its right side that of a large cat-like carnivore with a sharply pointed fang projecting above the mouth and black spots suggesting whiskers on the muzzle. Pfeiffer says archeologists

place special emphasis on the layout inside the cave, the position of the stone face particularly. The face was placed at such an angle that people coming in at the entrance more than 20 feet away saw only its right side, the human side. To see the feline side they had to come up close and, more than that, examine the image by the light of a lamp or torch.

So our analyses must take into account a dualism, a double theme. The face had a public and a private aspect, perhaps indicating "an exoteric meaning accessible to all who entered the cave and an occult, esoteric significance known only to those who had been shown its mysteries." There are other dualisms, other mysteries, beyond that. The face is half human and half beast, suggesting a Jekyll-Hyde

version of human nature. Further possibilities are hinted at by the fact that the face can also be interpreted as half male, bearded and moustached, and half female or feline. It seems that the habit of dividing the world into opposite or opposing forces existed among prehistoric people and, again, we see a continuity between their way of thinking and ours.

Pfeiffer might have speculated about a further continuity, one of even more profound mythic dimension: the feline image appears universally in traditional mythology throughout human history as symbolic of eternal life, with the cat or lion face representing the energizing solar power. Mythologists interpret this as an expression of the transcendence of consciousness in the world.

Yet another insight into human nature—that of our own modern age—appears in Pfeiffer's explication of the history of the caves' explorations over the past century. His account of the first discovery of cave art—by an amateur archeologist, Don Marcelino de Sautuola—reads like a chapter from Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. To begin with, Sautuola had dug near the entrance to the now famous Altamira cave in Spain on a number of occasions without noticing anything significant, until one summer day in 1879 his young daughter wandered into one of the cave's side chambers with a lantern, and rushed out to exclaim to her father what she had seen. The cave's ceilings were covered with paintings! Therein began Sautuola's humiliating experience of being branded a fraud by the archeological establishment until after his death. With few exceptions, the skeptical profession refused even to look at the Altamira art. The consensus was that Sautuola had conspired with an artist friend to paint the pictures. And Pfeiffer notes that one can add to the traditional skepticism of the scientific community the religious bias that existed a century ago, with traces of it existing yet today: a prejudice against evolutionary theory. "It was inconceivable then that a species as advanced as ourselves could have origins so ancient, a vestige from a Bible-based bias to the effect that God created Adam some 6,000 years ago. Any ancestor dated appreciably earlier than that could not have been fully human, and must represent something closer to apes or monkeys."

However, while the scientific community was skeptical, the general public was ecstatic, and flocked to Altamira to behold its wonders. Finally, 14 years after his death, Sautuola was vindicated with the find of another art cave in France, where a French archeologist, the very one who had discredited the Spanish Altamira art, began serious investigations. From then on, more and more cave art was discovered until soon the primary problem of the profession was keeping up with the documentation and care of what are now at least 200 major sites in Spain and France.

Pfeiffer notes other interesting experiences in pre-historic study that indicate the limitations we humans have in our perceptions. He says there are huge gaps in our records about the use of plants by Upper Paleolithic peoples, "mainly because investigators, almost all of them males, tended to focus on bones and hunting rather than plant remains and gathering, traditionally women's work." He also observes that the very method of excavation determines what is found at a given site. If one is expecting to find only large, crude tools, for example, one may miss a rich deposit of tiny, sophisticated tools in an excavation. Recent efficient methods of sifting dirt through fine-mesh screens under water have revealed that a trend toward increased miniaturization of tools began in France more than 25,000 years ago, thus adding important new information to the growing pool of knowledge about our early ancestors' skill and intelligence.

If he is right (and Pfeiffer acknowledges that more information is needed if definitive assessments are to be made), the cave art may be the earliest documentation we have to support the view of psychoanalytic theorist Carl Jung. Jung argued that in times of stress, mythic images erupt into consciousness and provide new energizing power to an individual or a culture. These images, which he called archetypes, are symbols of the structuring powers of the unconscious, and if integrated successfully into consciousness, provide transforming insights capable of helping the individual or the society survive stress and change. Such eruptions are often painful and frightening, and are reluctantly experienced.

In his *Politics of Experience*, psychiatrist R.D. Laing cites such an

experience, a 10-day "psychotic episode" undergone by Jesse Watkins, a British sculptor and former sea captain, following a trauma in his life. Watkins first had the extraordinary experience of "time going backwards" accompanied by the sense of having unusual control of himself and everything about him. He was taken to a hospital where he experienced the feeling that he and everyone around him had died, a feeling that Laing interprets as the death of his ego. Watkins then felt himself to be living and wandering in an animal landscape: "*I felt as if I were a kind of rhinoceros or something like that and emitting sounds like a rhinoceros and being at the same time afraid and at the same time being aggressive and on guard.*" (Italics mine.) Everything seemed to him to take on a new and profound meaning as he anticipated a fantastic and horrific journey ahead; he felt that he had existed forever, in all forms of life. He had a "particularly acute feeling" that everything was divided into three levels or planes of reality through which he would have to travel to the top with the gods, a journey so terrifying that he eventually refused it. By sheer will, he sat



on his bed, clenched his hands together, and pronounced his own name aloud, over and over, "in a clumsy way of linking myself up with my present self." Then, quite suddenly, he knew it was all over. He found himself past the ordeal, with an overwhelming sense of rebirth into heightened awareness and reality.

Watkins's "inward journey," his descent into the unconscious followed by ascent into new awareness, might be similar to Pfeiffer's interpretation of the Cro-Magnon descent into the caves, where the initiates, after deprivation and fear, saw the animal images by the flickering light of oil lamps and received from a shaman the ritualized order and roles by which they would be reborn into adult life above ground, a life of harmony with the social and natural environment. The cave paintings may have been the first mythic images of

the human family, transforming images through which the individual could experience meaningful connections with the universe, as well as responsible identity with the social order.

In commenting on the Watkins experience, mythologist Joseph Campbell compares his inward journey to that of Dante through the cosmic orders of *The Divine Comedy* of medieval times, of Odysseus' ordeal as he journeyed back to his responsibilities after the Trojan War in the heroic age of Greece, and of the quest of Gilgamesh in ancient Mesopotamian mythology. Campbell interprets the functions of a properly operating mythology in his *Myths To Live By*:

1. To waken and maintain in the individual a sense of awe and gratitude in relation to the mystery dimension of the universe, not so that he lives in fear of it, but so that he recognizes that he participates in it, since the mystery of being is the mystery of his own deep being as well.
2. To offer an image of the universe that will be in accord with the knowledge of the time, the sciences and the fields of action of the folk to whom the mythology is addressed.
3. To validate, support, and imprint the norms of a given, specific moral order, that, namely, of the society in which the individual is to live.
4. To guide him, stage by stage, in health, strength, and harmony of spirit, through the whole foreseeable course of a useful life.

Pfeiffer interprets the cave paintings as mythic images, but in his insistence on their mnemonic function, he underplays the first two functions posited by Campbell: their energizing religious and mystical dimension. As a science popularizer concerned about the future of life on our planet, he might also have emphasized more strongly our need and responsibility for evolutionary success in a time of hazard and confusion.

Like our pre-historic ancestors, we are faced today with an information explosion. We, too, suffer from the pressures of over-population and shortages of natural resources. Our successful evolution from Cro-Magnon times has given us a technology with which we could accidentally or by design destroy not only life in the present, but all life to come, as Jonathan Schell has so compellingly explained in *The Fate of the Earth*. Myths of the past, which successfully

helped energize and integrate civilizations scattered over the earth, no longer function to bring order and responsible participation to the single planetary culture of our shrinking world. Those myths no longer offer an image of the universe in keeping with the knowledge of our time. The mnemonic function of the cave art in a time of information overload has been replaced by computers. It may be that our youthful initiates gain some kind of mystical experience as they stand mesmerized in front of a Pac-Man machine, but I question

whether this puts them in touch with a mystery dimension of the universe and themselves.

The fine contribution of Pfeiffer's book is its new enlivenment of the Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon past. To enhance our understanding and respect for humans we once considered barbaric savages is to extend our sense of the lifeline of human consciousness. The farther back we can experience our roots, the greater the possibility we have for envisioning the future. When we can equate our

own efforts at survival with those of people like us 30,000 years ago, it can give us a perspective at once humbling and inspirational. I applaud Pfeiffer's call for an interdisciplinary team of a zoologist, artist, psychologist, dancer, architect, dramatist, and acoustical engineer to probe (delicately) the cave art's functions and meanings. The richer our understanding, the stronger our sense of continuity with, and the creative potential of the human family. Our very ability to observe the past in a sense creates the future. —*Loree Rackstraw*

JIM HALL

SPERM COUNT

On the bright slide a thousand
of them squiggle. Some set off
for the edge of this flat world,
some spin in a frenzy as if they know
this isn't where they were meant to be.
And there are the dead ones,
the two-headed or tailless ones.
The jig is up for them.
No marathon swim. No happy cry:
I'm here! Look what I've brought!

What are we anyway
if it can all be sent in one
microscopic slithering? I have,
as I peer at a thousand versions
of myself, every conceivable predictable
response. I am clearly more than
anything one of them can deliver.
I side with the two-headed ones.
They, at least, had some new idea.

When later I am home and cleaning out
old trunks, old letters, scraps of
writing, things I can't bear to read
or part with, things that have swum
as far as they can and have come to
nothing, I think again of the ones
that finally make it.
They would be the very ones
I would never have as friends:
dogged, mean enough to bump their twins aside.
The will to wriggle up the last hostile twist
of tube. The blind brutal ignorance to believe
the message that they carry
should be passed on at all.

We have been accustomed, especially in the West, to think of religion as a set of revealed facts—a special science about divine and spiritual objects—and the technology for manipulating those facts, through prayer and worship and right belief, to bring rain, or comfort in suffering, or an end to guilt, or life after death. But religion is not science, it is religion. In order to sense its distinctive character, in order to get our heads out of the habit of thinking of religion as a cognitive science, I propose to look at religion as art: as visualization, storytelling, drama, dance, song—as a free and fanciful venture of the human spirit.

It may be objected that this reduces religion to subjectivity, and denies to the divine any reality beyond private fantasy. But surely this misunderstands the nature of art, which is always about reality, always based on revelation of form and color, line and movement, pattern and metaphor, in the real world. Imagine that the Bible is a novel, with a main character called “God.” Theology is then a form of literary criticism, which studies plot and character and, above all, this rich and complex and contradictory central figure. The apparent contradictions, changes, and paradoxes become elements of form and technique. The evident human distortions and diversities of perception are now no more a liability than they are in, say, Durrell’s *Alexandria Quartet*, or, indeed, in *Rashomon*, in both of which they are central to the work of art. Seen from such a perspective, the question of truth in the Bible comes to be a question of discovery, of disclosure, of richness and surprise and insight, not an arid dispute over who wrote Colossians or whether the world is only 6000 years old.

The thesis that the life of religion is more akin to the imaginative than to the cognitive faculty is, of course, not original with me. One of my favorite statements of it is found in Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan*. Early in the play, as Joan is seeking a horse and an escort to the king, she says to Robert de Baudricourt, “I hear voices telling me what to do. They come from God.” Robert objects, “They come from your imagination.” And Joan replies, “Of course. That is how the messages of God come to us.”

Sometimes, when I am pressed to give a definition of religion, I say that *a religion is an inhabited metaphor*. Sup-

Art and Religion: Presences

pose, for example, we speak about the “field” of human experience. The idea of a *field* here is a metaphor, an image—or a family of images—picturing human possibilities. We may picture a neat grain field, with a full, level crop in rows. We may imagine, as in the illustration from the Book of Hours, laborers harvesting with a sickle and tying stalks in bundles, the whole field dominated by a castle in the background where some overlord awaits the fruit of the harvest.

In a wilder moment, the field of experience may be a Van Gogh cornfield, with crows, a wild sky, a wild wind. Or an impressionist field full of red flowers and light. Perhaps, like a Brueghel field, it has not only workers but lovers in the grass, or a drunken reveler or two. It may have wild beasts and serpents, or it may be quiet and neat. It may, as Krishna found it, be a dancing ground for cowgirls. It may be a field of battle, or of the triumph of death.

So far, we are still strictly within the domain of metaphor. But imagine a community of people for whom these images of fields are a common mode of expression. Suppose they begin to elaborate and interconnect these images into a mythology of the field of life. In the beginning, the field was pristine, flowered, secure, and lovely. Wild strawberries, blueberries and other fruit abounded, and there was no hurt nor harm in it anywhere. Now we imagine a violation, a fall, the loss of innocence, the introduction of evil. As we struggle with our own fields—full of weeds, lair for predators—grudgingly yielding edibles to our heavy labor, intermittently crossed by armies and littered with the dead, we mourn the loss of the primal field of innocence. We measure the lacks and failures of our lives against the true field, the eternal field, the divine field from heaven. We may seek

to pattern our fields after this original and sacred field, and petition for forgiveness at our original failure. And we may keep going by means of the hope that the Great Gardener who made the original field will come again, will free our field of its rocks and weeds, reconcile predator and prey, and make all things new so the last state of our field is more blessed and more abundant than the first.

As we express in the myth of the field our nostalgia for lost innocence, our aspiration to the ideal we cannot attain, and our hope for the fulfillment that eludes us, perhaps we develop a pattern of movement, a dance, a liturgy, in which we invoke the remembered and longed-for garden. Perhaps we build places for our ritual, shaping them to depict the form of the field. The music of our rites may show traces of the frog and cricket, the meadowlark and blackbird, the reed pipe and the wind in the grass. In a culture formed by the myth of the field, science would take shape as the study of the structure of the field, its soil and water and contour, and of the ecology of its life forms. To dwell in the community ordered by this imagery of the field of experience would be to inhabit a metaphor. It would be a religion.

* * *

While this example of a religion of the field is a pure invention for the purpose of illustrating my thesis, the notion of inhabiting the image is by no means capricious. Joseph Campbell, in one of his many provocative reflections on the nature of mythology, has come up with a somewhat similar point of view. Biologically, he reminds us, we are among those animals born helpless, and requiring prolonged protection if we are to survive to maturity. Unlike the marsupials, who live in a maternal pouch until they can cope on their own, we are out in the open from the beginning. Campbell says we build around ourselves, psychologically, a marsupial pouch of myth and ritual, to provide us with emotional nurture and security until we are prepared to cope on our own.

This metaphor of a pouch, or indeed of a womb, within which we dwell, and from which we need to be delivered, is found in many existing religions. Underlying all the current cheap talk of “born-again Christians” lies the notion that spiritually we still inhabit a metaphorical womb from

which we must be metaphorically delivered. One religion that seems to have adopted such womb-and-deliverance images for its mythology was Mithraism, the late Roman cult that for a time rivaled Christianity. We don't have much textual evidence of Mithraic ritual or mythology, but we know the spaces in which they worshipped and the relief sculptures in which their images are expressed.

Mithraism was a religion of salvation, of deliverance. While the myth and ritual of Mithraism seems to have revolved around the slaying of a bull, there are elements which express our theme. Mithraic initiation apparently involved letting the blood of the bull run down over the head of the initiate. We have no textual record of how this was interpreted, but in many initiation rituals, blood poured on the head explicitly establishes an analogy between the initiation-deliverance and the bloody delivery of birth. The metaphor of birth becomes the image for renewal, transformation, deliverance from the harshness, mistakes, disappointments, and dead ends of life.

The special feature of Mithraic imagination on which I want to focus is the ritual space. A Mithraeum was a cave or underground grotto, a dark, enclosed space, a womb. No text confirms the womb-metaphor, but it is there to see. Temples of the public Roman religion, synagogues, even Christian or Jewish catacombs, do not have this womb quality, this enclosure that is all interior, completely contained, focused on a central point at one end: the bloody place of deliverance.

I focus on this womb-metaphor in the space of Mithraic ritual because I believe it has significant consequences for the art and the religion of Western Europe. I don't know what the art historians say, but Church History taught me that the rectangular, columned structure of the Christian churches of the fifth and later centuries derived from the Roman basilica. But the basilica appears to have been a high, light, open structure. While a number of Christian churches obviously retain that design, many Christian churches tend to be heavy and dark. The interior spatial arrangement, though on a larger scale, appears quite analogous to that of the Mithraeum. I imagine—with all deference to the scholars in architectural history—than an “aes-

thetics of salvation” comes over from Mithraism to its successful rival, Christianity, in the construction of a womb-like place of worship, with an exterior of little consequence, with an enclosed interior centering on the place of bloody sacrifice (the altar of the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord). As the form develops, the addition of the stained glass window gives a view out of the womb of this world into the light of the world of salvation, colored, beautiful, transcendent above the heads of the faithful. It is as though inside the church one can look through a window into the other world. The window to the other world, as often said, of course, is the Bible, and at Chartres, for example, the Biblical stories and images are the form of those windows. One sees through the life of Jesus, or the story of Joseph, the light and color of the transcendent.



With Chartres, of course, we have moved from the heavy darkness of the Romanesque to the vaults and windows of the Gothic. The entire structure has become a metaphor of aspiration, rising and reaching out of the world of trouble toward a sky of light. It is a center of pilgrimage—that geographic metaphor of life's search for something more or better or newer, holy or sacred or magical, to complete and sanctify the journey. And the pilgrim at Chartres—whether the medieval devotee of Our Lady or the modern successor to Henry Adams—finds his pilgrimage located in the company of all those stories shown in the windows, all those pictured analogies from ancient Israel, the labors of those twelfth and thirteenth century guilds that are remembered and represented in the windows they paid for, the royal patrons whose coats of arms pattern the

transept in company with royalty of ancient Jerusalem, and the worn stone of the footprints of centuries. The building itself becomes a metaphor of all our quests. Its figure of fulfillment may perhaps be expressed by standing in the middle of the nave, where there is a maze underfoot, while to the west, above the portal of judgment and the life of Christ, the great rose of light opens out from the womb of this world into the sky of rebirth, renewal, deliverance.

* * *

The specific acts of imagination, of art, that are the window, the maze, the structure, are expressions, images, representations for the broader act of imagination which understands this life as a womb from which we shall be born into eternity. This underlying image, or metaphor, or design, which construes or interprets this life through the model of the womb and our deliverance from it, is widely recurrent if not virtually universal as an understructure for the specific images of Christianity, or Mithraism, or Taoism, or some other religious tradition.

A profound and comprehensive study of the images associated with this model is found in the work of Stanislav Grof. An art major in college before going on to medicine and psychiatric research, Grof undertook a systematic analysis of the imagery of psychedelic experiences as found in patients involved in clinical research in Prague. He began with a psychoanalytic approach, but he soon found that much of his material, including specifically those images and clusters of images of explicitly religious significance, could not be adequately accounted for by Freudian assumptions. Especially those images that had to do with issues of life and death, of meaning and destiny, Grof found were consistently modeled on the analogy or ground-image of birth.

It is essential to the present discussion to make clear that studies by many investigators from diverse points of view have established that the specific images and types of images found in an individual subject of psychedelic research are not induced by drugs, but are generated out of that individual's experience and life-history. They are, however, not simply memories, but a complex integration of memory, perception,

culturally-transmitted models, and fantasy—they are, in other words, creative products of the individual imagination.

Yet these individual creations are often similar to those of classic myths and rituals. Often they appropriate these materials from the culture, but frequently new versions or whole novel myths may arise, still having in common with the classic myths the engagement with the existential themes of life and death, meaning and destiny, and also sharing with them this modeling ground structure of the metaphor of birth. The eruption of images which fills the black and silent void in prolonged sensory isolation, or bewitches the quiet mind in deep meditation, shows these same qualities of invention, of cultural style, of birth-related groundwork. It is at least suggestive to imagine that the myths and rituals of the great religions may themselves be the heritage of such experiences, such ventures of the imagination, such engagement with the underlying metaphor of birth.

The birth-image in the substructure of these acts of imagination and of religion is expressed in four basic patterns, under which the images can be grouped in four categories, which Grof calls "matrices."

The first matrix is associated with the image of a secure and untroubled womb-life. This is the paradise which has been lost, the place of primordial security and abundance and innocence. The garden of Eden, the Buddha's palace, Vishnu's untroubled sleep are scenes depicted on this foundation. In European art, see how consistently paradise is a walled enclosure. In the Limbourg brothers' representation in the Book of Hours, it is a globe-shaped enclosure, with a doorway out through which Adam and Eve are driven at the fall.

The fall, of course, is the transition to the second matrix, the loss of paradise, the onset of labor. The second matrix itself is the hell of labor without progress, the place of torment, the labyrinth, the whirlpool, the dead end with no exit, no meaning, no hope. The biology of birth is such that we have all been through such an experience and we draw on it as a basic model for all such experiences in life. Not only Dantean images are found here, but the triumph of death, the wasteland, Europe after the Rain, Auschwitz, The Ship of Fools, Moria, the endless night.

The third matrix, the progress from womb to outer world, is the model for a wide variety of images. We have mentioned the pilgrimage, and the blood of the Mithraic initiation. There is the quest of Gilgamesh for the herb of immortality; the progress of Dante up the mountain of purgatory. There is a profusion of erotic imagery—rare in religious contexts in Christianity or Judaism, but overwhelming at Khajuraho in India, where the statues are sexually involved in more ways than most of us could invent. There are all the cosmic conflicts of good and evil, light and darkness, Armageddon, the Last Judgment.

At the next point of transition are found a number of key religious images, interpreting the renewal of life through the model of the transition from the death of the womb world into the freedom and new life of a larger world outside. There is the image of dying and going to Heaven; there is Shiva the destroyer who is also Creator; there is the Buddha passing into extinction and thereby achieving bliss. There is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Fourth-matrix images are birth or rebirth, the lotus, the peacock, the opening up of the heavens with a radiant light, the spring.

* * *

Since these images are all shaped by or grounded in the underlying metaphor of birth, and since that metaphor appears to impose itself on the material rather than to be voluntarily adopted or invented, we might question whether the birth-image is properly treated as an act of imagination, a work of art. Yet, clearly, in any work of art the deepest unconscious patterns and images in the artist's experience form or inform the meaning-structure of the work, and the power of the work derives in significant measure from the ability of this form to be an image of the viewer's deep structure, and thus form the universality of those patterns. I simply propose here that one of the roots of religion is in the history of acts of creative imagination in which the structures of our problems of life and meaning are united with the remembered and imagined structures of our common experience in coming into this world.

What lies beyond the subjective act of imagination? Does the work of art apprehend a deeper truth about

the universe, or only a deep truth about ourselves? I don't believe the question can be answered except in an act of faith which, whatever else it is, is an act of imagination. But some things can be said.

These images are more than private invention. There is a history and a community which share and sustain and transmit the images of faith, and it lies beyond our private and individual invention, as an outside reality. And the common experience not only of birth, but of the problems of life and death, is a foundation in our common reality for this design.

On the other hand, our quest for answers here, for a reality surer and solidier than myself which can surround and protect me, is in itself patterned after the ground-image of the womb. If we can recognize the act of imagination which seeks to recreate that primordial protection, we can also recognize the possibility of moving out of this structure, leaving the pouch, going forth from the cathedral. We cannot know if death is simply the process of passage to another new realm. But we can venture an act of imagination in which the womb-images are left behind. In such an invention, open space and clear light will be key elements. The oppressive, the struggling, the security-oriented structures and weights will be gone. A quality of play, of free movement, of absence of barriers will prevail. Incorporations into the wider life of the species as a whole, or of the entire animal kingdom, or of the universe from its beginning are unobstructed. Such imagining may enjoy sensory delight without the burden of negatively-experienced earthly body, or may adventure into other worlds and drink of their wisdom.

Plato imagined a most-real world of pure forms, pure ideas, with the underlying or overarching form of the Good as the foundation for all the others, and for all that is. Herakleitos imagined the world as fire, as pure energy, flux, change, dynamism. Saint Teresa imagined her highest experience as marriage with the divine, as a complete fusion of her individual being and the ultimate One.

One of the fullest lines of development of the adventures of the imagination in this open space beyond the womb-imagery is found in Tibetan Buddhism. In the Tibetan Book of the Dead, for example, we are asked to imagine the dead person going on a seven weeks' jour-

ney, which may issue either in deliverance or in rebirth to another life in which to try again. The imagery of the latter part of the book, where the subject has passed the point of no return on the way to rebirth, is consistent with what I have said earlier about birth-related images in religion.

But the person who reaches that stage is the person who still has those problems for which the birth-metaphor is appropriate. Such persons pass through the visions of the earlier part of the book without understanding and accepting. The clearer, the more open, the less burdened and attached they are, the sooner they can find release. So the highest images are found at the beginning.

The first image is of pure, clear light, which appears twice. This is followed by visions of great and benevolent savior-figures, one at a time and then five all together in a great mandala, all accompanied by the traditional iconographic elements, consorts, and the like. Then each in turn appears again, in its terrifying, threatening aspect, then again all together in a mandala, and finally there is a horrendous scene, fully worthy of Grof's third matrix, of assault by the blood-drinking monster-deities and the Lords of the Dead. To survive this is to be delivered, to fail is to be driven inexorably to rebirth.

Chogyam Trungpa, in his commentary on the Book of the Dead, imagines that the primary undifferentiated clear light is present all the time. To the extent that I hold on to my own ego, my separateness, my importance, I imagine the clear light also as separated into an individual and personal form, the divine savior being. The more desperate my investment in myself, the more ferocious the imagined other. In other words, Trungpa is claiming that the image of a divine being other than myself is itself an act of invention, which I have carried out in defense of my own separate ego, which is also an act of invention.

On this view, then, the undifferentiated, pure light is all, and both we and the works of our imagination are its diffraction, its shadowing, its diffusion. All art would be both a hiding and a disclosure of the universal light: through the rose window of the cathedral, jeweled glimpses of the light beyond our darkness.

—David Crownfield

MARGARET ATWOOD

A BOAT

Evening comes on and the hills thicken;
red and yellow bleaching out of the leaves.
The chill pines grow their shadows.

Below them the water stills itself,
a sunset shivering in it.
One more going down to join the others.

Now the lake expands
and closes in, both.

The blackness that keeps itself
under the surface in daytime
emerges from it like mist
or as mist.

Distance vanishes, the absence
of distance pushes against the eyes.

There is no seeing the lake,
only the outlines of the hills
which are almost identical

familiar to me as sleep,
shores unfolding upon shores
in their contours of slowed breathing.

It is touch I go by,
the boat like a hand feeling
through shoals and among
dead trees, over the boulders
looming unseen, layer
on layer of drowned time falling away.

This is how I learned to steer
through darkness by no stars.

To be lost is only a failure of memory.

... those were the days, my friends,
We thought they'd never end...
We'd sing and dance for ever and a
day...

The last part of the trip on I-5 south, 4 lanes wide and straight as a ruler through the flat fields of the San Joaquin Valley—nothing growing in the dead of winter. Mountains on the brown horizon, at first a darker shadow, but then the scarp, the Grapevine grade to the Tejon Pass, elevation 4100 feet. It's a cliff—this brow of the San Gabriels rising from the flat land, a vertical face hung with the massive pipes that lift the northern California water up from the aqueduct. Pump it south to irrigate the San Fernando Valley and its girls, to nourish the lawns and wash the cars and fill the pools—to water the creative growth of Hollywood.

Hollywood—the movies once again; in the year past I have felt more remote from the business (and more involved in theatre). One or two of the blockbuster epics I saw. They grossed millions and touched little in me—a kind of bemused amazement at the complexity/diversity of the craft of special effects. The heresy is that I was bored seeing “E.T.,” and frustrated by the waste of Peter Coyote’s talent.

And the real movies—? Thinking—having been in and on the periphery of the business for many years—how difficult they must have been to put together these days. Finally how *lucky* to be released were those other—the serious efforts, comedy or drama, that came out of the hopper.

I was saddened by its being a *matter of luck*, even as I enjoyed, was sucked in by the old movie magic of fine films—“Diner,” for instance... the magnificent “The Chosen,” “Tootsie” (with the classy acting of Dustin Hoffman)... “Missing,” “An Officer and a Gentleman,” “Smash Palace”—from New Zealand and enthralling; the real epic “Reds,” “Das Boot”—more, as I write even this incomplete list, than I remembered.

To think again: unless it's theatre—where *the experience* is analogous and also different—being part of an audience is part of the experience—another level on the movie/play. There's some kind of

Re-Entry

collective emotion that wells up from all the people with you—in front of the big screen and those big archetypal people on it. Still, the people films I did see—they seemed like eddies in a restless ocean—overwhelmed by Blockbuster brouhaha.

This grey December is freighted with that sadness, tinging my nostalgia, and in these waning days of what has not been one of the better years, perhaps like the 100th Monkey I am conscious of the whisper of the old devil wind of fear... As it is with the world, things are not terrific in Tinsel Town... I had made arrangements to talk to some old friends on this trip, most of them, as I am, migrants from the industry in New York. Some are directors or director/cameramen, others are high up in production management; one a producer, with a production background: I thought I would ask them what's happening.

“Same old shit!” said one of the directors. “Like that old grip we used to know in New York said.” We have dinner in a restaurant with an unprepossessing facade near Paramount.



Behind the shabby exterior is charm, original paintings and warm-tone paint on the wall, candles and white linen on the tables. The place serves the New American (California) cuisine (“use only fresh ingredients and don’t be afraid to invent,” Alice Waters says); with the waiter we have a complex discussion about what to eat (the Klausner salad is fine chopped paté, watercress, red pepper—a touch of Sauterne). This one thinks the business is just the same, “it changes that people think are going on—they’re superficial... it isn’t going to change until it becomes electronic—and I guess the die-hards in the business insist that will never happen.”

One night I drove west on Wilshire Boulevard, passing blocks of million dollar condominiums near Westwood—which are not selling—thinking about the movie business *not* being recession-proof. During the *great* depression people *needed* entertainment—so they kept going to the movies—so the industry didn’t suffer: that’s the myth.

But, according to the research of Theodore E. James, Jr., securities analyst specializing in film, broadcasting and theme park industries (reported in *Variety* in April of 1980): “that myth gained credence in the wake of industry box office gains during the 1974 recession... much of that advance was directly attributable to the success of one picture—‘Jaws’.” In fact domestic box-office declined each year from 1931-33, total employment in the industry (production, distribution, exhibition) fell from a high of 143,000 to 119,000 in the same years, and the number of theatres also declined.

In the 14 weeks between Memorial and Labor Days this year—summer being one of the hot times to release films—the gross box office figure was \$1,387 billion. According to *Variety*’s Box Office Index, that’s 14% over ’81—which was no slouch itself—and the best summer ever! Finally, the year turned out to be a record making bonanza of \$3.449 billion, up 16% from the record breaking year previous.

In these days in Hollywood, from another director friend: “I’ve been in the business 24 years and about every third year there’s been a crisis that

was going to end the business and it's never managed to . . ."

And somebody else: "It's been very good to me, but it's not so much fun any more . . . I was saying to somebody just the other day I'm glad I'm going out and not coming in . . . it's not the same . . . the business . . ."

And another: "There's a lot of introspection about the cost of things, re-examinations . . . feels like we're in the middle of some transition . . . I can't perceive the outer edges exactly, what's on the other side is yet to be determined . . ."

Or: "I'm no oracle on all of this—I don't think anybody has the answers any more—the audience has changed radically. Very very young people are going to the movies—and I mean very young! Astronomical costs demand an astronomic audience—they're all looking to do 'E.T.' . . . But if 'Gandhi', 'Sophie's Choice', 'The Verdict'—if those pictures go and do well, hopefully there'll be a change again—to make

some reasonably decent, grown-up movies . . ."

Things change in Hollywood and things don't change; when I was there in '69 when "THX-1138" was shooting, Hollywood Boulevard was bead and leather shop schlock. People wore fringes and boots and long straight hair and mini-skirts. That's all gone now—replaced by straight tourist schlock. And out west of Beverly Hills, along Santa Monica, the monolithic glass towers of Century City have sprouted grim and brooding under grey skies. In one office, though, I did see a woman wearing a mini-skirt and I thought if you don't learn from history you're doomed to repeat it . . . *mini-skirts—doomed?* . . .

And farther out to Santa Monica: large gas stations and automobile dealers with ranks of gleaming cars in their lots, a community itself (politically one of the most radical in the country), the beach and the archetypal Santa Monica pier jutting into the Pacific Ocean . . . Holly-

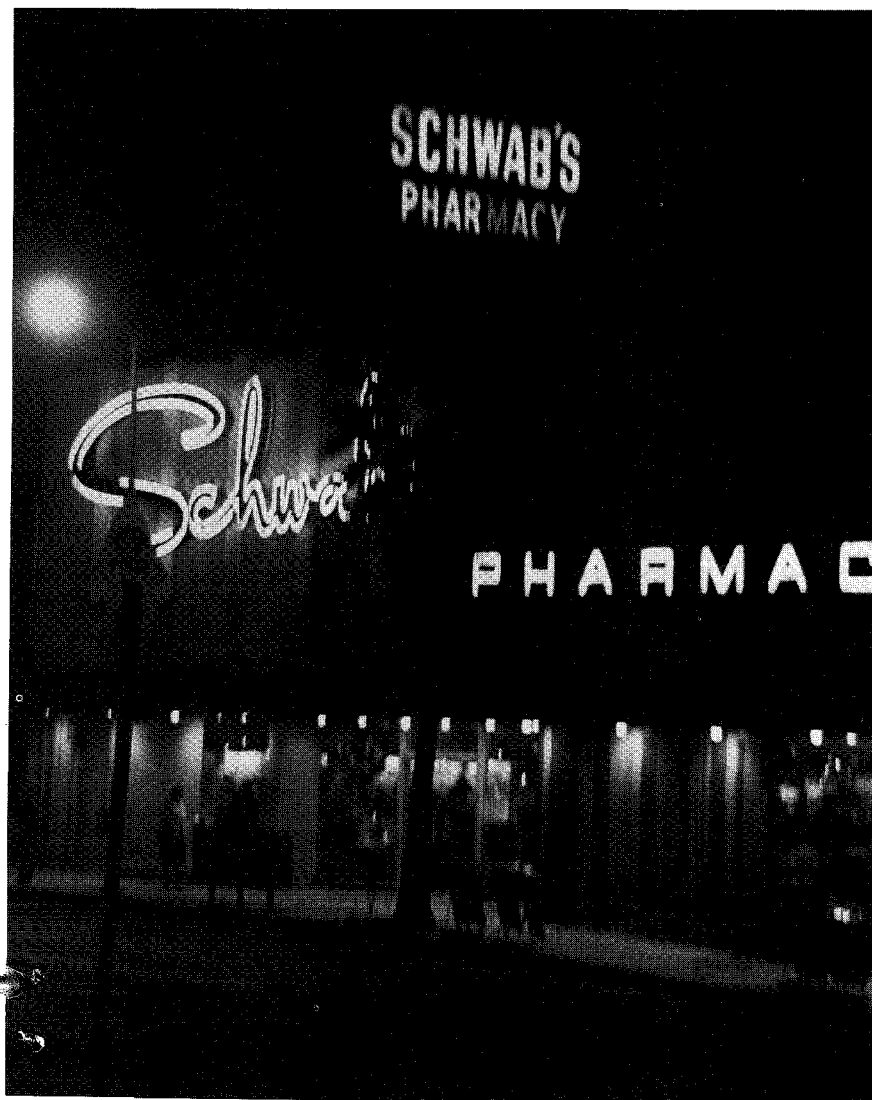
wood—show business: the cult of youth and beauty and the trade that caters to it. "HARD BREASTS?" an ad in *Variety* queries—"Have you had breast implant surgery which left you with hard, unnatural looking or painful breasts? Have you undergone painful breast 'cracking' procedures in trying to alleviate the problem? YOU CAN BE HELPED!"

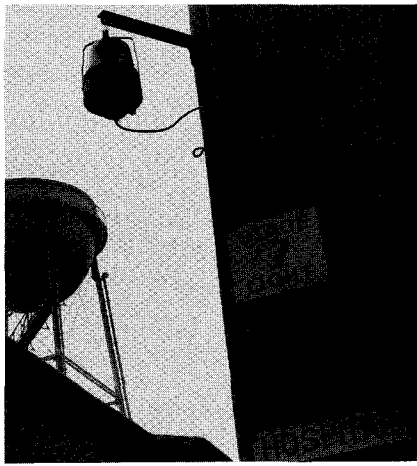
According to the lead article in Wednesday's *Variety* (12/8/82), in the past year the average negative cost of a film was \$10.5 million; to put a picture out nationally (so-called 'wide release'), according to a consensus, will cost between \$6 and \$8 million; the break-even point for the average film is—negative and releasing costs plus distribution fees—roughly \$28 million.

One of my friends talked specifically of the impact of this: Where once it might have cost \$500,000 to promote and get a film into the market, it now costs six million for this average hypothetical film. "So now it's a \$12 million movie, and the trouble is there's no place—no way to try it out—you gotta go for broke!—(According to the *Variety* piece, 60% of marketing cost is spent by the time a film opens)—For instance, the industry has become dependent on television advertising to bring the audience in—and it's very costly—very costly! So—if you have doubts about the movie, put it on the shelf and cut your losses." (There are, I hear in Hollywood, a lot of full shelves.)

"In the television end of it," he goes on, "the networks are losing their share of the audience—there's a lot of talk about pay-cable, and a lot of that is just wishful thinking—except—Home Box Office. . . ." (HBO, a subsidiary of Time, Inc., the high roller! Controlling close to 50% of all pay-cable business, with three times more subscribers—11 million—than nearest competitor Showtime, forecasting earnings of \$100 million, HBO is planning to make made-for-pay movies—12 in the coming year—24 the year after.)

"That," he said, "is activity for the town . . . Except a good number of them will be made abroad, Canada—Australia—Europe . . ." Producers are looking for properties where they can put up \$2 million and come out with a \$4 million movie—because someone is putting up the other \$2 million for foreign





theatrical distribution. Besides, overseas, they're more geared to the production of the theatrical than the television movie. He says, "They're also looking for properties that are theatrical in look . . . they want the image to be HBO theatrical movie, not a tv movie made for HBO."

And, significantly, the number of pictures made was down 16% in '82—and within that overall decline fewer

pictures were made in Hollywood (38%), and considerably more on foreign locations (75%)—(that's what that friend had foretold). And it obviously contributed to the banner unemployment in the domestic industry, at least the unionized part of it. Figures from the 22,000-member International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees & Motion Picture Machine Operators (The IA) indicated an overall unemployment of 40% for the year. SAG (Screen Actors Guild), DGA (Directors Guild of America), WGA (Writers Guild of America) also report leaner times.

Another day, another friend from another life, another set of memories: "Everything today seems to be a step-deal—if they like the original script . . . and then if they like the rewrite . . . then if they like the polish . . . and then if they like the budget . . ." He goes on to echo what I'd heard elsewhere, and what I'd hear again. The studios have be-

gun to put on a dollar limit—so much and no more. "If it can't be brought in for that, go someplace else and no hard feelings."

Talking about the costs, I say, *ad nauseam*, twenty years ago big budget was a million. Laughing, he says, "Well, now Burt Reynolds gets five million! And then somebody upstairs says to take it out of below-the-line . . . and what's that mean—fire two electricians? After they give away the store up above!"

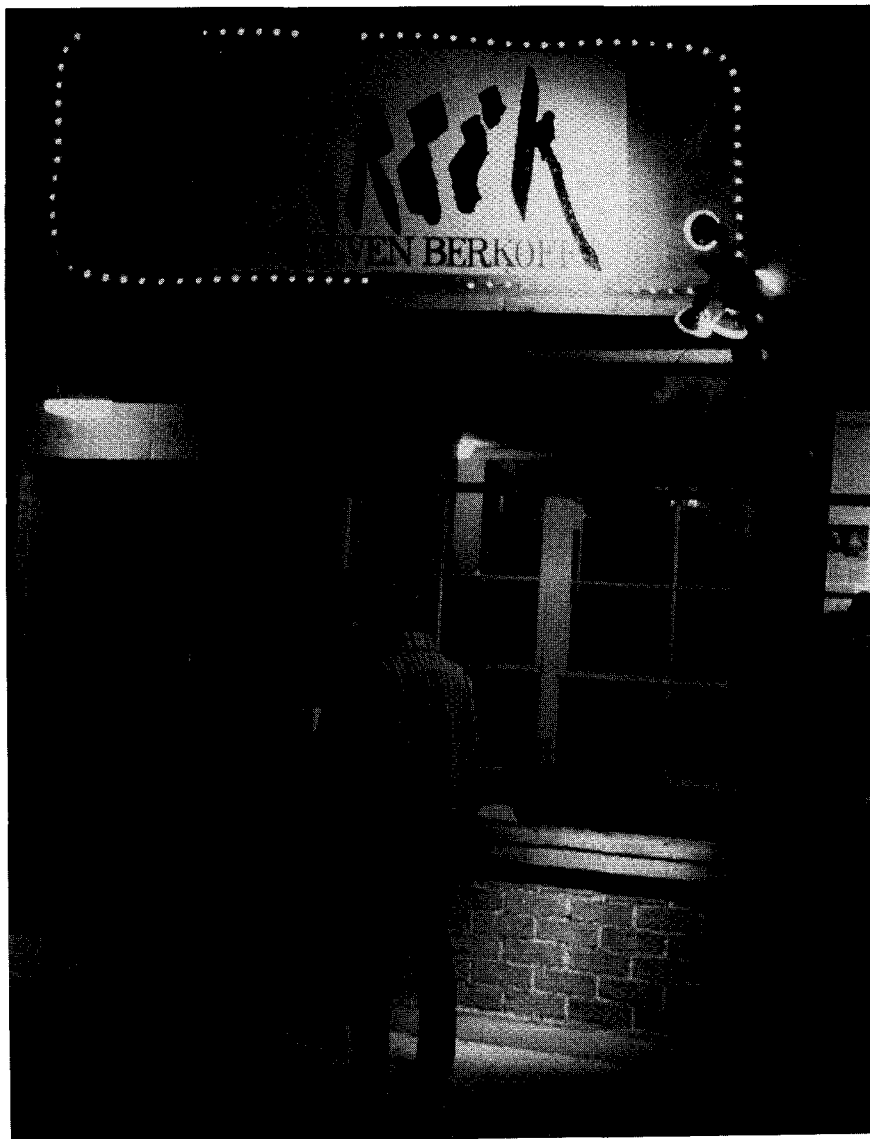
The form for a motion picture production budget is separated into two sections by an actual line; the first pages are for the creative + artistic talent—producer, director, actors, writer, script—and then comes the line. Below it are the technical crew (who can be equally creative and artistic), the costumes, sets, the transportation and the coffee and the insurance—everything else.

"Everybody gets too much money these days, so there's a domino effect in budgeting. This last couple of years the cameraman has been hot—he demands *his* big money and then he says, 'I can't do it without *my* operator, *my* assistant, *my* key grip and gaffer . . .'"

Someone else: "The treatment of top stars—if you want to work with this one, you pay the people he wants on the picture with him. You find you're not negotiating with a crafts service man, but with the star who happens to like the fact the crafts service man provides peanut butter and raw carrot in the afternoon."

Or, from another: ". . . As they say, the above-the-line people—the stars—the medium-sized stars are getting two, three million . . . Scale—and I'm joking calling it scale—for a fairly decent well-known actor today is like a million bucks!"

And about directors, a production man speaking: "So many don't know what they're doing—don't have a clue until they get on the stage in the morning . . . It used to be said the cost of film stock was the cheapest part of it, but it's not true any more and now they want to print everything . . . five, six ten thousand feet a day . . . Hey, this director not too long ago got mad, said his creative juices were being stifled—he wanted to bring in 200 extras on a Saturday just to see what they looked like—come on now—stifling his creative juices . . . shit!"





And the unemployment: "Cable companies, they're going to have to have product, but the interesting thing is the two big outfits, Showtime and HBO—they're both non-union . . . you'd be amazed the amount of non-union work going on right here in town—and half the crews are IA . . . no other work, you still gotta put bread on the table."

Hollywood is still a film town, the process of production of the art/craft of film is chemical—wet—an anachronism in the world that is moving from the physical to the electronic sciences. So, by the nature of the process of technology, it will—eventually—be replaced by tape—video, which is electronic and dry. For the present tape still suffers from resolution/visual limitations, but H. (high) D. (definition) tape is in the wings.

"Well," this one said, "you know me, I started in tape back in the old days—what's that—twenty five years ago—and I will be retired before it has a major impact . . . I was in New York and *the miracle* had arrived—and ever since then the miracle has been arriving. H.D. tape will come into being, but it's always been over-
sold. . . . If tape isn't impacting the movie business now, other things are—like distribution by satellite—which has advantages. Once

you make distribution an electronic medium, well . . . But it has to be High Definition tape, and it has to be a standard system adopted industry-wide."

About the producers, from one who was once a production manager: "A lot of management are not really film makers, and because they're not filmmakers they're vulnerable to being victimized by their own clichés—their own slogans. Too often, I think, where management have come from being agents, there's a different kind of orgasmic moment in film making for them—that's the putting together of the deal. The essential quality of the script, or a particular character—it doesn't have a meaning for them. It's the package that excites—and subsequently, the way the film is turning out is viewed in only the coldest commercial terms . . ."

In the course of these four nights and days, I drive back and forth in this contradictory town. I hear about Wolfgang Puck, who was the head chef at Ma Maison, which is a hot eating ticket in Tinsel Town. He left there to open Spago's on Sunset, serving gourmet pizza (New Italian California Cuisine?), and one of my friends said the wait is six hours for a table. I see the night joggers, one

loping along past a strip joint on Sunset which is not far from Wolfgang's new place, some way past Schwab's.

Musing about what I have heard, I am working on attempting to integrate my feelings about the movie business. In the last couple of years my own attraction has shifted more and more to theatre. There the aesthetic is the interaction between live life-size people on a stage and the collective emanations from an audience that views them in the metaphor of the play—people to people. And there's the excitement in the immediacy of the inspiration of each performance—which is always in some subtle or enormous way different from the one past and the one to come. It's a happening in the now, it can be a kind of *Tao*.

Is there not an indicator in that one of only three IA locals in Hollywood to report a less bad year was Theatrical Stage Employees #33? The business agent spoke of an increase in calls over the past year, and unemployment of only 10%-15%. There is, it is said, an upsurge of theatre—regional, noncommercial, avant garde, however you describe it—all over the country. It works in a gamut of facilities—state-of-the-Art in Ashland, Oregon, a hole in the wall in a church basement in Timbuktoo. Last summer I was a student at the

5th annual Bay Area Playwright's Festival, put up at Tamalpais High School in Mill Valley.

Seeming to have little to do with the movie business, in Hollywood that week I attended "Greek" by Steven Berkoff at the Matrix Theatre, presented by the L.A. Theatre Works. Berkoff, who also directed, is an actor too, one of those jacks of all theatre trades that are not uncommon in the movement. Born in London in 1937, he started acting at 19, studied mime in Paris, has written his own plays, adapted, and directed all over Europe, Australia, Israel, published a collection of short stories . . . this production is the American premier of his work.

And an interesting work it is, four actors playing various parts, with four chairs and a table on the stage, using mime and monologue inside its drama, playing off a title that refers to classical theatre and the obscurity of a special language—in this case Cockney. It was "Greek" to us in the audience, but it was also somehow clear.

This stripped-down paring away of convention is a way to get at the center, to the people and their action and interaction, their ambiguities and ambivalence—what all theatre is essentially about. Without the boundaries of walls or sets or curtain this kind of theatre sets up a space for the imagination to work in. In a way, that stripped down world and these mysterious (mythic/archetypal) people are in the unconscious—which is this theatre's appeal to us. If the form is abstract, the power of the language spoken by the performers creates a more real landscape than the verisimilitude of a movie.

That day, on the car radio, traveling between the offices of my old friends, I listened to the climax of a life. I heard (and saw) the lead into the inevitable death of a masked menacing shadow figure who was threatening to blow up the Washington Monument. I heard the excited voices of the reporters on the scene. They're not quite sure what is going on, fill in air space with wonderings and rumors—"He's let go the people in the monument—Maybe there's an accomplice in the van . . ." I see it happening. Who in our country can not see the pictures of all the bloody

mayhem of the last twenty years—? It was on TV, and we watched—the pictures come back.

We are conditioned to see terrorists as mad dogs and fit, therefore, to be shot. This terrorist is Norman Mayer; he's 66 years old. A long term crusader against nuclear weapons, a self-taught expert on nuclear war, he was spoken of as a "gentle soul." He demands all public and private forums begin a "national dialogue" on the threat of nuclear weapons. Or he will detonate the 1,000 pounds of dynamite in his van, blowing up that quintessential symbol of our poor puer country. (Police said later this was admittedly not enough explosive to do a lot of damage, and finally when they came to examine the van there was no dynamite anyway.)

That same week's issue of *Newsweek* carried an article titled: "Life According to TV." George Gerbner, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, has published findings that are devastating. Going beyond the question of Children/Violence/Commercialism to the darker question of the cultural impact, the subliminal pervasive influence of this image on the people who watch, the audience—us!

Vigilante justice at the monument; in the sights of the SWAT team sharpshooters, after a 10-hour impasse, the audience is growing impatient. The reporter's voices are hoarse. Norman starts to move the van. Volleys of shots ring out. It's just like a TV show.

Gerbner and his associates (the exhaustive 15-year study funded by the National Institute for Mental Health, the surgeon general's office, the American Medical Association), having taped hundreds of hours of shows, having done detailed demographic studies, produced a carefully prepared multiple-choice questionnaire. The choice was between answers that reflected a true view of the world, and answers that reflected the world according to TV. Thirty percent of the population are classified as "heavy viewers" (those who watch more than 4 hours a day) and according to their answers, their view (meaning their social attitudes, their political and moral decisions) is congruent with that view presented by

television. A world, Gerbner tells us, that is obviously totally skewed. There's small consolation in the fact that "light viewers" (less than two hours a day) chose answers more in accordance with real life.

"He was doing something to save people," his former employer, Charles Greenspan, said of Norman, "and he gets killed."

According to Gerbner, the difference between television and other media of entertainment/enlightenment (theatre, movies, books, magazines) is that with these latter there's a choice. There's an interest, and pursuing it is a conscious act. Television viewing has become a ritual matter of turning it on automatically sitting mindlessly and passively in front of it—just taking it in. Gerbner thinks that viewers need to be given, and need to take, an active role in what's on—and television should be put on the political agenda (as, apparently, it is in England). There should be discussion of this "all pervasive force."

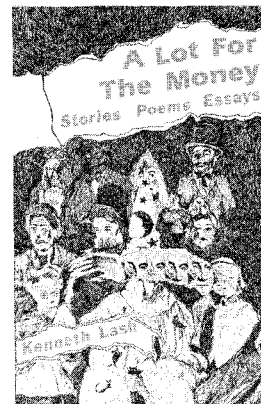
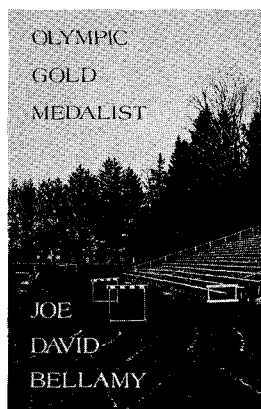
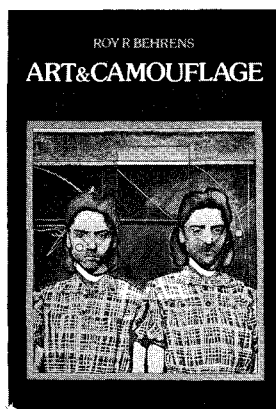
Tonight Norman's poor Parsifal martyrdom will be on the evening news. And tomorrow—I wonder how many deal makers will be thinking of a TV/movie docu-drama script—the possibility of a package they can sell?

The average American child, according to Gerbner, will have absorbed 30,000 electronic stories—before it reaches "the age of reason." That's the formation of a cultural mythology, which tragically, unlike other ages' myths, is based on illusion.

A director:

"I think the biggest problem the film business has to deal with is the audience's desire not to be confronted by new, original and thoughtful ideas or styles of execution. If the subject is essentially funny; if it contains a lot of hardware, a lot of technology; if a subject contains characters that are familiar and comfortable, it is more likely that the film will succeed than if a film conforms to what, in previous times, was thought to be an example of good artistry—that is: a work in which the audience is challenged to re-think old ideas, or challenged to see things in a fresh or new way, or to examine its own values." —Lawrence Sturhahn

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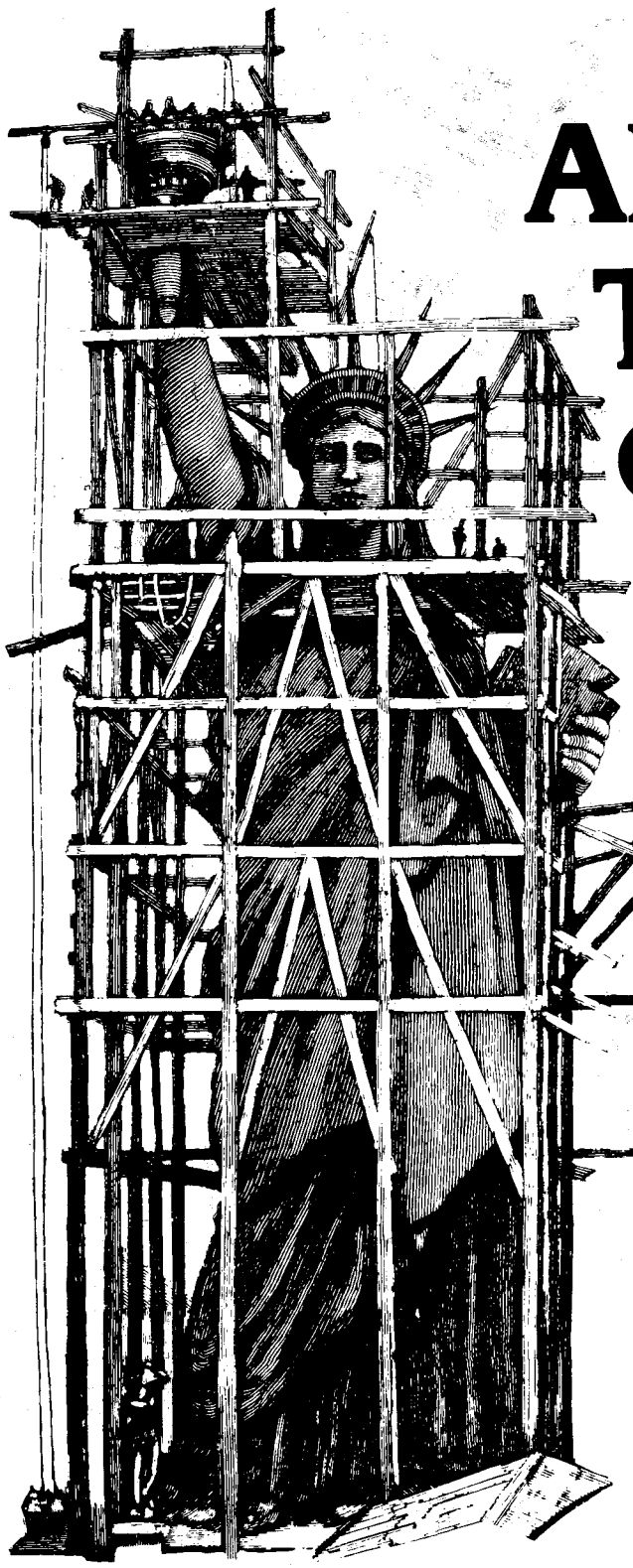
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